Right Here

by StarvingLunatic

Summary

Regina's been sick and Emma has a theory. Regina's pregnant. Regina thinks that's ridiculous, but Emma turns out to be right. From then on, Emma and Henry try to help Regina make it through a pregnancy that she doesn't seem very thrilled about. SwanQueen. Swan-Mills family moments. Reminders of OutlawQueen.

Notes

A/N: this story takes place after season 4, but ignores all of season 5. As usual, I do not have a beta, so please excuse my mistakes. I don’t own these characters. Disney does.

A/N the second: So, this concept has been done to death, but here’s my two cents of it. It started out where I was going to use this story to try to explore Robin Hood’s character while getting some domestic SwanQueen going, but I junked that plan as soon as I started writing this. I hope everyone sticks around anyway. There will be SwanQueen, so there’s that. Last
but not least, check out my Facebook page and say hi. Okay, so, after all of that, on with the story!
Henry woke up expecting to have breakfast waiting for him, as that was the norm for the Mills’ household. But, before he even left his room, he could tell something was off. He did not smell any food in the air and he did not hear his mother moving downstairs. He scratched his forehead as he stuck his head out of his doorway. There were no signs of life in the house.

“I thought she was better,” he muttered. His mother had been in a bit of a funk on and off for the past couple of months, which he supposed made sense.

One, his mother had just lost the sister she did not even know she had. He did not know the full story of what happened to Zelena, but from what he could glean from whispers, Zelena had killed herself. He was not sure why or if it was even true, but his aunt was certainly dead and it definitely affected his mother. He was not sure, but he suspected his mother would have enjoyed having a sister and Zelena taking that from her was worse than trying to erase her from existence.

Of course, finding out she had a sister who was trying to erase her from existence could not have been good for his mother, Henry figured. His mom tried to play it off, but he could not imagine finding out he had a sibling who hated him enough to want him dead even though they did not know each other. Making matters worse, there was more his mother had to deal with, more she had to grieve.

There was the fact that his mother also lost her supposed soul mate. It was made worse by the fact that his birth mother was the reason his mother lost her soul mate. Emma brought back Robin Hood’s wife from being executed in the past. Robin Hood went back to Marian. No one knew how much it really affected his mother. Yes, she had gone through a period of not talking to Emma, but everyone assumed she was over it when she went through hell to bring Marian back from the ice coma she had been in thanks to the Ingrid the Snow Queen. People had even declared his mother a hero from that, but she never really looked like she believed that.

But, after stopping some demons in Storybrooke things had been quiet and his mother had been even quieter. She tried to put on a mask, to pretend she was the same person she used to be, but the pretense was not a very good one in his opinion. The rest of the town seemed to buy her mask, seemed to be think Regina was all right, but Henry could see the pain underneath, see the fine cracks, and he hoped like hell she did not shatter anytime soon. His mother went through the motions of life. She tried to live, but she was failing in his opinion. Some days were better than others.

“Today seems like it’s going to be one of the bad days, though,” he sighed, his heart heavy.

He went downstairs to see if he might be wrong, to see if maybe his mother was just going about her routine so quietly it would make church mice envious, but there was nothing was going on down there. He returned to the second floor and went to see if his mother got out of bed. He knew on days when he stayed with Emma, his mother would stay in bed all day and then pretend she had not once he came home. But, he was not an idiot and he could tell from her unmade bed, not quite as perfect hair, and hastily put on makeup.

“Mom?” Henry called as he knocked on her bedroom door.
There was no answer, so he knocked again. The sound hammered through the quiet and seemed to slam up against his ribs. *This might be the worst yet.* Then, he heard a faint sound. It sounded like coughing. He pressed his ear to the door and heard more than coughing. It was like heaving. His mother was throwing up.

“Mom? Mom, are you okay?” Henry opened the door and poked his head in slowly. He wanted to give her plenty of time to get herself together if she needed to. “Mom?”

The sound of more vomiting reached his ears and he grimaced. He stepped into the room and took a quick look around. His mother was not there. The door to her en suite bathroom was closed. He went to that door and heard violent retching.

“Mom? You okay?” he asked as he knocked on that door.

Regina groaned. “Henry?”

“Yeah, Mom. You all right?”

“I’m…” She paused and made an unholy gurgling noise. “I’m all right.”

“You don’t sound all right, Mom.”

“I’ll be out soon…” She heaved again.

Henry was tempted to poke his head into the bathroom, just to see her, but hearing her was enough for him to know she was not fine. “Okay, Mom.” He made a point to make noise as he left the room, so she knew she was alone again. He could hear her throwing up even more and groaning as if she was pained.

Henry stayed outside Regina’s room, waiting for her. After a couple of minutes, she did not come out, so he went back in. It was silent. He knocked on the bathroom door.

“Mom?” There was no answer. His heart might have stopped. “Mom?” And he might have forgotten how to breathe.

Henry put his hand on the knob, half expecting the door to be locked. It turned out he was wrong and he opened the door just enough to see his mother prone on the floor. He gasped, icy terror shooting through his body. For a split second, he was frozen.

“Mom!” He fell to her side as his heart leaped into his throat. “Mom?”

Regina only groaned. She did not appear to be unconscious, but her eyes were closed. She was sweating and her skin was chalk white. Henry jumped up and rushed to his room. He grabbed his cell phone. *Thank you Emma for getting me a cell!* He called Emma without a second thought.

“What’s up, kid? It’s early,” Emma complained with a yawn.

“It’s Mom! There’s something wrong!”

Emma gasped and he could hear her sit up. “What’s wrong with your mom? I’ll be right there.”

“She was throwing up all morning and now she’s lying on the floor. I don’t think she can get up!”

“Okay, kid. Relax. I’ll be there right after I put some pants on.”

“Yes, please.”
Henry hung up and ran back to his mom. She was still on the bathroom floor, just as pale and clammy as before. He bent down next to her and put his hands just over her. He wanted to touch her, hold her, assure her everything was going to be all right, but he was too scared. He did not want to chance making things worse.

“Mom, it’ll be okay,” Henry said, panting, unable to control his breathing. His heart pounded in his chest and everything in his body seemed out of control, like he was about to come apart at the seams, but it did not matter. His mom needed help and she was the only thing that mattered.

“Henry?” Regina mumbled and then she put her hand flat on the floor, as if she was about to push herself up. “I should… I should… make breakfast…”

“Mom, don’t move. Emma will be here any second.” Or so he hoped. Emma was not the best at magic, but she was getting better. He hoped she remembered she had magic. If she decided to take the Bug instead, he might have to call the police… beyond the sheriff anyway.

“Emma?” Regina said the name if she did not know who that was. Her brow furrowed as if she was trying to remember his birth mother.

“Yeah. It’ll be okay. Are you hurt anywhere? Can I do something for you?” he asked, his hands still hovering just over her, ready to spring into action if necessary. He was trembling, though, and he tried to convince himself it was not anxiety, but just preparedness that caused him to shake. I need to help her.

Before he could get any answers, Emma made her presence known. “I’m here, kid! Where are you?” Her voice sounded like it was downstairs. She must have teleported to get to the house so fast. Good.

“The bathroom in Mom’s room!” Henry replied.

“You didn’t have to call her,” Regina muttered. Her voice was weak and scratchy. Her throat probably hurt from throwing up.

“Mom, you’re sick. I need help and you need help,” Henry pointed out.

Regina let loose a choked moan, but did not object. Emma burst into the room, slamming the door against the wall. Henry’s eyes shot up to her as Emma fell to their sides.

“Regina, are you okay? Is it magic? Were you attacked?” Emma inquired.

“I’m fine,” Regina groaned as she attempted to get up once more. She made it further than before, partially sitting up with the support of both hands and somewhat leaning into Henry.

“You’re not fine, Mom. You’ve been throwing up all morning,” Henry replied.

Regina grunted and shook her head. “It’s not the first time. I’m fine. You didn’t need to rush over here, Sheriff.”

“To Hell with that! You got the kid all worked up and worried and, honestly, so am I if you’re lying on the bathroom floor after throwing up,” Emma said.

“I was merely resting. My stomach has been a little upset. It’s nothing,” Regina insisted. She took a deep breath and then sat all the way. “Now, if you both might give me a little privacy, so I might finish my morning rituals. Afterward, Henry, I will get started on breakfast.”

Henry shook his head. “You can take your time, Mom. I can have cereal or something.” He did not
want her to overexert herself and get up even worse.

Regina sniffed. “I refuse to send you to school with a belly full of sugar.” She frowned as if that was the worst piece of mothering she could possibly do.

“You heard your mom, kid,” Emma said and she mussed his hair. She then nodded toward the door. It was not very subtle, which was what he expected of his other mother, but Regina was too distracted by her illness to notice.

“Right. Okay, Mom, we’ll leave you alone for now, but this isn’t over,” Henry said.

Regina waved him off, but did not make any move to climb to her feet. Henry stared at her for a moment, but did not say anything. There was some color coming back to her cheeks, which gave him a little hope. Emma stood up and Henry followed her. They left the room and went downstairs.

“All right, fill me in. What are we working with here?” Emma asked in a whisper, glancing up the stairs.

“This is like the fourth time she’s been sick in the bathroom. She doesn’t know I can hear her when it’s quiet enough. It’s usually earlier in the morning. She might have the flu, but doesn’t want to admit it,” Henry replied.

“Why do you think she has the flu? Has she been sneezing or coughing?”

He shook his head. “No, but she’s definitely sick. She’s been going to bed earlier than usual. Again, she doesn’t think I know, but there are times when I can’t sleep or I just want to read and I notice all the lights are out.”

“Anything else?”

He put his hand to his chin and tried to think of something. “Oh, she took a nap a couple of days ago. She said she was just tired, but she never takes naps.”

Emma nodded. “Maybe her age is catching up with her. She’s like sixty.” She snickered.

He snorted, but then glared at his other mother. “This is serious, Emma. Her age wouldn’t make her sick like that.”

“No, you’re right. Anything else?”

“What I can think of, but it’s not just today. This isn’t new stuff.”

Emma nodded. “I’ll see if I can talk her into going to the doctor.”

Henry loudly blew out a breath. “Good luck. I suggested that last week and you’d think I told her to go jump off a bridge.”

“Well, this is Regina. If she wasn’t melodramatic, none of us would even be here.”

“Yeah, but this is probably serious, right?” Henry could not recall a time when his mother was sick. What if someone cursed her? It was not like she was exactly popular in Storybrooke, even though she had saved the town and people’s lives a few times.

Emma rubbed her chin. “Maybe. Maybe it’s something magic related. Who knows. I’ll try to talk to her and see what’s up, okay?”
Henry arched an eyebrow. “You think she’ll talk to you? I mean, I know things are better between you two, but she still winces whenever she sees Robin walking around with Marian.” He was not sure his mothers would ever be close after Emma changed the past. He understood why she did it, but he also understood his mom looked at it as losing her last chance to have some form of happiness beyond him.

Emma scratched the back of her neck. “I imagine that sting will be around for a while, but we seem cool. Hell, did I not almost become the Dark One for her?”

Henry scoffed. “You got lucky the fairies broke out of that hat and contained the Darkness.”

Emma shrugged. “I guess.”

“You guess? Do you really think Mom was impressed with those heroics?” Hell, he was barely impressed with those heroics. He almost lost Emma to the Darkness. It was in that moment, he understood sometimes being the hero was not always the best thing or even a great thing to do. He was fairly certain his mom felt the same way.

But, if Mom does feel the same way, then Emma means something to her, right? So, maybe they can be close, be real friends again. He hoped so.

“Hey, she stepped in front of a demon god thing to save me. How is that any different?” Emma countered with a smug look.

Henry did not have a comeback for that one. Emma was right. While his mother might not have been on the road to become the Dark One with her sacrifice, she had been more than willing to lay down her life for Emma a couple of weeks ago. Maybe they are close. He was not sure now. He could not figure them out. Adults. They made his head hurt.

“Okay, but do you really think she’ll talk to you about this?” Henry asked. His mother was not a talker, unless she was boasting about something or being snarky.

Emma just shrugged again. “Couldn’t hurt to try.”

That response did not instill Henry with much confidence. Their conversation was halted as Regina made her way downstairs. They both dashed to the sofa to try to act natural. Regina looked at them with pursed lips, but she did not say anything to them that hinted she heard the conversation.

“Henry, you should go put your clothes on. I know we’re running late, but that’s no excuse to do everything in your power to make us later,” Regina said. She sounded almost normal, but she was trying too hard to sound normal. She had done much better with her appearance, though. She looked like she did everyday, ready to rule Storybrooke with a well manicured iron fist and some Prada shoes.

“You know, I could just take the kid to school,” Emma offered with a smile. “I’ll take him to Granny’s for breakfast.”

Regina curled her lip. “So you can let him have a milkshake in the morning and hang around your pirate friend?”

Emma groaned. “I keep telling you he’s not my friend!” As far as Henry knew, Emma had been doing her best to avoid Hook, but he was not sure why. She told him sometimes people grew apart, but he did not know what that meant. Again, adults. He wished they just said what they meant sometimes.

Regina sniffed. “We’ve all heard the line before.” She continued on her way. Henry laughed until Emma glared at him. He grinned at her and then rushed off to go get dressed.
Emma watched Regina as Henry dashed off. Was Regina just regular sick or was it something serious? If Emma had come in just now, she would have never suspected Regina was laid out in the bathroom a few minutes ago, weakened from vomiting. Maybe it was hangover. Except, a hangover would not be over so soon.

“So, Regina, tell me what’s really going on,” Emma said, making her way to the kitchen.

“Just what do you mean?” Regina countered as if she truly had no idea what Emma was going on about.

“Why were you out on the bathroom floor like you were at a bachelorette party last night? You been drowning your sorrows in hard cider?”

Regina looked her up and down, as if she was nothing. “Don’t confuse me with how you problem solve.”

Emma gave her a cheeky grin. “Oh, so that was someone else I toasted with at the bar in Granny’s?”

Regina sucked her teeth and cracked a few eggs. Apparently, she was making breakfast, no matter what. “It was nothing. I’ve just been feeling queasy every now and then. I think I might be developing an allergy.”

“To what?” Emma was not sure about when and how people got allergies, but she would look it up when the conversation was done.

Regina shook her head. “I’m not sure. I haven’t been able to pinpoint what I’ve been using or eating, but what else could it be?”

“Henry thinks you’re sick. What do you think?”

“I doubt it. I’m always fine afterward, maybe a little weary as I’m very much not used to that,” Regina said.

Emma held in a laugh, too amused that Regina would not use the words “throwing up.” She watched Regina work for a second, wanting to see how “weary” she was. Regina was certainly slow. Going to pick up a pan for the eggs, her hand shook a little, as if strained.

“Do you feel like a strong wind might be able to take you out?” Emma asked.

Regina chuckled. “Is the student challenging the teacher already?”

Emma shook her head. “I don’t think I’ll ever get to that point, but I was more asking because I can take Henry to school if you want me to. I’m serious about that. You don’t have to do it all and you can ask me for help, especially with him. I’m his mom, too, right? We’re doing this parenting thing together, now, right?” They never said it out loud, but that had been her general understanding of things since Regina no longer denied her any opportunity to see Henry or do things with him.

Regina sighed. “You’re right. I’ve just been accustomed to doing it all by myself and… well, I want him to see I can do it all.”

Emma’s heart hurt a little. She’s still worried about losing him. “He’s not going anywhere, Regina. You can stop worrying about that.”
“Even after the way I treated him over this whole… mess.” More Regina euphemisms. “Mess” always referred to Robin Hood.

“He understood, Regina, just like I did. It’s okay. Now, do you want me to take him to school?”

Regina’s mouth turned downward as she thought on it. “Yes,” she said softly.

Emma could not hold in her grin and she stood up just a little taller. It never failed to make her happy when Regina showed truth and faith in her. Plus, she had an excuse to come back and check on Regina later on, which was good. She had a little idea as to what might be wrong with Regina.

When Henry returned, Emma let him know she was taking him to school. She had to leave while he had breakfast, so she could go get the Bug. When she came back, Henry handed her an egg sandwich as they piled into the car. Emma glanced at him.

Henry shrugged. “Mom said you should have it. I guess as a reward for taking me to school since I missed the bus.”

“Well, we both know I’m not going to turn down free food.” Emma smiled and put the sandwich in the back seat. Most of the time, she would eat while driving, but not with Henry in the car. Regina would never forgive Emma if something happened to Henry because of a sandwich and Emma would never be able to forgive herself. On the way to school, Emma had the chance to assure him that she would make sure his mom was all right.

“How?” Henry asked.

“I won’t let her ‘I’m okay’ her way out of this one,” Emma promised him.

Henry smiled. “Thanks, Ma.”

Emma beamed, all too happy to finally have a title of her own. She did not call attention to it. He did not seem to notice he said it, which was fine with her. She wanted him to do it whenever he felt comfortable with saying a title for her.

Henry hugged Emma as they pulled up to the school and then he was gone. She had to go to work, but had to make a stop first. She called David to let him know she would be late and then she pulled up to the pharmacy. She hoped the dwarf in charge did not notice her and she hoped like hell he was not working the counter or she would have to field way too many questions from her parents. Of course, her luck was cursed, so it was not just one dwarf at the counter, but the whole damned assortment. I should just shoplift the damn thing, but I’m the freaking sheriff around here.

“Fuck you, Fate. Fuck you so hard,” Emma grumbled and then walked to the counter with her head held high. She ignored all of the stares as her items were rung up and she strolled out of the building. Fuck them. She was not doing anything wrong and it was none of their business.

“Emma, you’re pregnant? Does this mean you’re back with Hook?” David said, in her face the second she walked through the door at the sheriff’s office.

Emma jumped back. “Damn it, Dad! Can I get the door before you let me know what traitorous gossips the stupid dwarves are?”

David put his hands up in a surrender mode. “I’m not judging or anything.”

“Good, since the test isn’t for me. So, no, I’m definitely not back with Hook and even if it was for me, this wouldn’t make me get back with Hook. Did they call and congratulate you or something?”
“Next time, I’m going out of town to do this.”

David puffed out his chest. “That they did. They’re happy I’m going to be a granddad again.”

“Well, like I said, the test isn’t for me. So, you can put your pride away.” She marched to her desk and flopped down.

“Not for you? Then for who?” he asked, his eyebrows knitted close together. He was undoubtedly mentally going down a potential list. Hopefully, he did not figure it out.

“No one you need to worry about.”

“It can’t be Ruby. I mean, she would just go buy her own.”

“Not to mention Ruby has a whole entire girlfriend, who would then want to know how the hell Ruby got pregnant.” Of course, with magic, who the hell knew what was possible. *I might wanna ask Ruby about that. Hopefully, it’s not too personal or something.*

David nodded. “Oh, yeah. Then who?” He stared at her, as if that would get her to cave in and tell him.

“It doesn’t matter. The person was too nervous to go buy it herself and I, like an idiot, volunteered.” That was almost the truth. “Just know it’s not for me and the dwarves need to learn to mind their business. I mean, what if it was for me and I was trying to keep it a surprise? Who are they to tell my business like that?” Emma huffed.

David nodded. “True, true. I’ll talk to them about that. Besides, I don’t want to know all of your business, especially at the pharmacy.”

Emma chuckled and smiled. “Thanks, Dad. I promise not to buy anything too scandalous to avoid giving you a heart attack.”

“That’s all I ask.”

“I’m sure it’s not. Now, let’s get to work.”

David nodded and then day began. It was mostly quiet, paperwork, and the occasional call about vandalism. The day paused during lunch. Usually, Emma had lunch with her father or she went to bother Ruby at the diner, but right now, she had other matters to handle.

Emma went to the mayor’s office and just smiled her way past Regina’s assistant. It was not out of the ordinary for her to stop by every now and then. Despite what Henry thought, she and Regina got along pretty good most days. Yes, she could tell Regina was making a huge effort not to lose it on her for no reason, but that was something. Regina was at her desk, looking a little green.

“Regina, you okay?” Emma asked.

Regina did not get a chance to answer. She rushed up from her seat and made her way to the private bathroom in the corner. Emma rolled her eyes as she heard Regina vomiting. She went and stood by the shut door.

“I ask again, are you okay?” Emma shook her head, knowing what the answer would be.

“Fine,” Regina groaned and then she threw up some more.

“You sure you’re not sick?”
“I assure you I am not.”

Emma rolled her eyes. She stepped away from the bathroom as she heard Regina turn on the sink water. A few seconds later, Regina emerged, looking a little worse for wear.

“So, what set that off?” Emma asked. *Are there smells already getting to her or is she one of those poor souls who have morning sickness the whole day?*

“What are you doing here, Emma?” Regina countered with a pointed glare. Her annoyance probably was not an act. Surely the Queen hated for someone to witness her weakness.

“I’m here to check on you and offer my two cents on what’s making you spill your guts like that.”

Regina waved her off as she took her seat. “It’s nothing. Something must have spoiled in my lunch.”

Emma held in a scoff. “That’s what you’re going with? Spoiled lunch?”

“It’s the only way to explain why I can’t stand the smell of it.”

“No, there are other ways,” Emma mumbled. “What smell set you off? I can’t imagine there’s lots of smells in a salad.”

With a wicked glint her eye, Regina smirked. “Perhaps you should try eating one every now and then. If you must know, though, the dressing. It must have gone bad.”

Emma rolled her eyes. “I somehow doubt you let anything from your house go bad, except maybe you.”

Regina glared at her. “You’re not as cute as you think you are.”

“You say that, but we both know it’s not true. Now, I have something that I think might clear up your mysterious illness.”

Regina arched an eyebrow. “What do you have?”

Emma pulled out a box from the plain plastic bag and set it on the desk. She made sure to place the product name right where Regina could see it. Regina leaned in to get a good look and curled her lip.

“I assure you, Miss Swan, I have no use for that,” Regina said, turning her nose up. Emma held in a wince. Things were not going good if she was suddenly “Miss Swan.”

“Aw, come on, Regina! You’ve got to admit it lines up. The morning sickness, the fatigue, the fact that you can’t stand the smell of something.” Emma ticked each point off of her finger.

“That might be the case with other women, but not with me.”

Emma tilted her head. “Why? Are you a born again virgin or something?” *Oh, wait, what if that is some magical nonsense?*

Regina growled at her. “Don’t force me to throw you through the door.”

Emma held up her hands in surrender. “You don’t have to be that mean, Regina. How about you just entertain my moment of insanity? If it’s nothing like you say, then it doesn’t mean anything, except that I just blew money I don’t have on a product I don’t need.”
“I have nothing to prove to you.”

“Of course you don’t. In fact, you’d be proving me wrong and you’d get me out of your hair,” Emma pointed out. “We both know I’m going to keep at this until you prove me wrong or until I get another theory as to what’s wrong with you. After all, I do think I’m cute.”

Regina growled, but snatched up the box, knowing just how persistent Emma could be. It helped that Emma knew no matter what Regina threatened the most she would actually do was the silent treatment. It hurt like hell, yes, but was definitely better than being set on fire. Besides, she could always count on some outrageous threat to bring them back together and have Regina forgive her.

Regina stomped off to the bathroom yet again. Emma would not have been surprised if she left scorch marks on the rug. Emma sighed as soon as Regina slammed the bathroom door closed. If Regina was pregnant, who the hell had braved sleeping with her? Certainly not you, scaredy cat.

Emma knocked against her forehead. Nobody asked you, brain.

Emma would be lying if the idea of Regina being pregnant did not twist her stomach and burn her throat a little. It hurt to breathe more than it should. She had no right to feel that way, not after ruining Regina’s relationship with Robin Hood and doing whatever the hell she pleased with Hook. Not that Hook was much of a factor on her life anymore. That was one of the dumbest mistakes she ever made. How the hell did things get so bad that I actually let a guy wear me down? What am I, seventeen again?

Her thoughts were thrown off as Regina came out of the bathroom again. There was a scowl on her face, which Emma expected. She took her seat and Emma sat down across from her.

“This is absurd, you know,” Regina stated.

Emma shrugged. “I think there are crazier things in this world. We’ve fought them, after all. Hell, I was almost the Dark One not too long ago. You almost got eaten by a Chernobog. How crazy was that?”

Regina’s face did not even twitch. “Yes, but that’s magic. Magic for me is as crazy as physics would be for a scientist here. This thing you’re suggesting is bordering on ridiculous.”

Emma’s brow furrowed and she squinted, trying to figure out why Regina would think her theory was ridiculous. “Because you’re a nun now?”

“You seem rather interested in my private life.”

Emma laughed. “Nah, I know you don’t have one. You forget, I’m probably the person most privy to your life after Henry. I know you don’t do a damn thing and you avoid people like the plague. Hell, you’ve barely talked to Maleficent since your little operation ended. Wait, is she the father?”

Regina’s frown deepened and she massaged her temples, as if dealing with Emma gave her a headache. “I hate you so much.”

Emma grinned. “You love me.”

Regina did not miss a beat. “I’d love to fling you out of that window.”

“You’re very grouchy today.”

“I think that’s every day when I’m subjected to your nonsense. You’re hardly like this with other people. Why am I so special to deserve your silliness and witticisms?”
Emma laughed. “I think that’s what best friends do.”

“You can’t just declare me your best friend.”

“Oh, but we both know it’s true. I have plenty of friends, but you have me and you have Maleficent. I’m fairly sure I’m the favored blond in this equation.”

“Are you sure? I didn’t try to put Maleficent under her own sleeping curse,” Regina pointed out.

“Nah, but you also didn’t gift Maleficent your favorite person in the whole world and you haven’t cursed me to be a dragon for twenty-eight years. So, I think I got this.”

Regina looked like she wanted to set Emma on fire, which only made Emma want to tease her more. Regina needed a little lightheartedness in her life and Emma liked the chance to be silly every now and then.

“Have you had lunch?” Regina asked, changing the subject with all the subtlety of a hammer to the skull.

“You want me to eat your salad?”

“Please. I already put the dressing on it. Now, just looking at it makes me want to…” Regina trailed off and her eyes strayed to the bathroom.

“You can’t say throw up, can you?”

Regina just frowned even more. Emma wanted to tell her careful or her face would stay like that, but she decided against pushing her luck. Emma snickered, but took control of the offending salad. It was pretty good. There were nuts and berries and chicken in it. She might have to eat salad more often.

“You should check the stick,” Emma suggested, trying very hard not to lick the bottom of the now empty food container.

“And while I disappear into the bathroom, do you plan to eat the plastic?” Regina asked.

“Stop stalling and go see what it says. You can rub it in my face if you’re right.”

“When I’m right.”

Emma motioned into the direction of the bathroom. Regina got up and went to check on the stick. Emma heard the loud gasp and the low clack of something hitting the tiled floor.

“This is impossible,” Regina whispered. “Impossible.”

Emma was up and at the door quickly. “What’s impossible? What happened? Was I right?”

“This isn’t possible,” Regina growled. “Go buy another!” she ordered with a fire in her eyes. It was surprise she had not set fire to everything.

Emma took a step back, not expecting such hot energy. “It said you’re pregnant?” As an answer, Regina shoved the stick into her hands. She glanced down and saw a little plus sign.

Regina shoved her finger in Emma face, almost touching her nose. “I cannot be pregnant.”

“Like I said, crazier things have happened.”
“No, you don’t understand. So, this thing is clearly defective. Go buy another to disprove it.”

“Uh… Sure.” Emma was not sure why Regina was so angry. When she put her mind to it, she was good with kids, especially when she was not setting them up to be eaten by the Blind Witch. *Best not to say that out loud.*

Emma hurried away before she said something stupid and went to buy another pregnancy test. She grabbed three different brands and when she got the counter, she glared at the dwarf. He jumped back.

“Not a word about this. Are we clear?” she snarled to let him know she meant business.

He whimpered and nodded. She snatched up the bag and went back to Regina rather than returning to work. If there was a problem, her father would call her. She dropped the bag on Regina’s desk.

“Happy now?” Emma huffed.

Regina sucked her teeth and capped a bottle of water she was drinking. Apparently, she had prepped for Emma’s return. Regina took the tests and disappeared into the bathroom. She did not come back out. After twenty minutes, Emma decided to knuckle up and knock.

“Regina, you okay in there?” Emma asked and once again, she felt like she knew the answer.

“It’s… it’s not possible.” Regina sniffled.

“I’m gonna come in, okay?” Emma tried the knob to find the door unlocked. Regina was slumped over on the closed toilet, one test in her hand and her free hand stroking the bridge of her nose.

“This isn’t possible,” Regina insisted. “They all must be wrong.”

“Regina, I don’t think that’s how they work.”

“Then, it’s a trick! Someone enchanted these!” Regina made a closed fist and snapped the test she held in half.

“Why would they do that?” Emma did not want to tell Regina outright that she was grasping at straws.

Regina shook her head and rubbed her whole face with her hand, not even caring about her makeup. “It’s the only explanation. It’s the only way any of this makes sense.”

“What do you mean? Why can’t the simplest explanation be the right one?”

“Because this isn’t the simplest explanation! I can’t possibly be pregnant and it’s cruel of anyone or thing to suggest otherwise!” Regina flung the broken test the floor. The halves shattered on impact and Regina covered her face with both hands.

Emma had plenty of questions, but decided against asking them. Instead, she moved cautiously and wrapped her arms around Regina. Regina wept into her hands. Emma was not sure if it was from happiness, sorrow, or everything in between. *It’s never a dull moment around here.*

-8-8-8-8-

Next time: a doctor’s visit for confirmation.
“You okay?” Emma asked after unknown amount of minutes, cutting through the thick silence that somehow buzzed off the white walls. She held Regina tightly against her as the mayor cried into her hands. They were in the private bathroom in the mayor’s office. Regina finally stopped crying, but she had made no motion to move.

“This isn’t possible,” Regina said, her voice low and scratchy. Her voice seemed to vibrate through the small space, rattling in Emma’s bones. Nervous, sorrowful energy pulsed through Emma and she lost focus for a long moment.

“So you keep saying, but that doesn’t seem to be the case. Is it because you haven’t been with anyone?” Emma inquired. The only person who dared touch Regina had been Robin Hood, but she felt certain that relationship had not been strong enough for Regina to sleep with him. Or, so she hoped anyway. *Maybe this is some magic thing I don’t get.*

Regina sighed. “It’s just not possible.”

Well, that was not the denial Emma had been hoping for or the magic excuse Emma would have liked. “Okay, all joking aside, we both know how the human body works and everything. If you slept with Robin, did you use protection?”

Regina shoved her away and glared at her as if she had done something wrong. “That’s none of your business, Miss Swan!”

Emma winced and her heart clenched in her chest. “Oh, so we’re back to that, huh?”

Regina let loose a long breath and massaged her temples. “Emma…”

“It’s his, isn’t it?” Emma tried to hold it together as it felt like her chest collapsed in and her ribs stabbed every vital organ they were sworn to protect.

Regina shook her head, a scowl on her lips. “This isn’t possible.”

“So you keep saying. Tell me, how is it impossible? You slept with him, right? It isn’t some magic trick, is it?”

“It would be a very poor trick if it was. This isn’t possible, though.”

“Why?” Emma really needed an explanation. It would be a good excuse to go drink later on. She needed something to stop the pain in her chest.

Regina shook her head. “I took a potion back in the Enchanted Forest. It stopped my ability to carry a child, not that my body seemed willing to do such before the potion. The point is that I shouldn’t be
able to get pregnant.”

“Well, you were trapped in a land without magic for twenty-eight years. Maybe the Curse voided the potion,” Emma said. Why the hell does that even sound logical to me? It's not the hope of a crazy person, but something screwy that could actually happen around this place.

“It shouldn’t work that way. Even without magic, I was still able to control people with their hearts. The potion should have stood. Beyond that, I was far from a nun during the Curse yet managed to go some twenty-eight years without a pregnancy. How could this happen?”

Emma inhaled sharply. “Maybe some… soul mate magic or something?”

Regina just made a noise deep in her throat. It was another sound that resonated off the walls and cut into Emma’s marrow. If soul mates were anything like True Love, then it was powerful magic. It should have been able to break through the potion Regina took, as far as Emma understood magic anyway.

“I think we both know Robin was far from my soul mate at this point,” Regina replied. She did not sound bitter or upset over it.

Emma rubbed the back of her neck. “Well, it has to be something. You’re pregnant, after all.”

“Those tests…” Regina made a sour face. “They’re not a doctor.”

“No, they’re not. You wanna go see Whale?” The news would be all the way around town before they left his office. That bastard has never heard of confidentiality. And even if he had, his staff would not respect that when it came to Regina.

Regina shot her a wide eyed look questioning her sanity, which might be valid. Whatever sanity Emma might have had left felt like it was oozing out of her ear. She might have to watch for a puddle by the time they made it out of the bathroom. Do I even have enough sanity left to cause a puddle?

“Whale? You think I would trust Whale with something like this?” Regina asked.

“Well, is your royal physical around here or something?” Emma asked. There were thousands of people in Storybrooke she had yet to meet. Maybe one of those was Regina’s doctor.

“As a matter of fact, yes, I do have a doctor who is not Whale. I’ll go to her office and put this nonsense to rest.”

Emma nodded. “You want me to come?”

Regina just glared at her, but just underneath that, Emma could see the worry in those russet eyes, could feel the terror radiating from Regina. There was a plea for Emma to be there. Emma would be there every step of the way. So, yeah, I’ll be wading through a pool of my sanity by the time I get out of this freaking tomb. She would bury her sanity in the mayor’s bathroom. Somehow, it made sense to her.

“You’re not alone in this, okay?” Emma reached out and took Regina’s hand. She held it tight and stared Regina right in the eye. “I’m here.”

“Thank you,” Regina whispered. Emma’s chest hurt just a little less. How many people had Regina thanked in life?

-8-8-8-8-
Emma returned to work with her mind reeling and her nerves jumping. Regina was pregnant. Regina was going to make an appointment to see her doctor and they would go. They, as in she and Regina. Regina was pregnant with Robin Hood’s baby. Robin Hood, who had gone back to his wife Marian, who Emma brought back from the past to keep her from being executed by Regina. There was a headache in the making if she thought too much on the whole matter. Alcohol was so in her immediate future that she wanted to just walk to the nearest bar and make it happen already.

“Where you been?” David asked as Emma made her way to her desk.

“Something came up,” Emma replied. I should start keeping whiskey in my desk drawer. People do that, right? She had a feeling the people who did that were not the law of their small town, though. She also suspected those people had drinking problems, which she could also see in her future if she was not careful.

“You and Regina handled it, didn’t you?” he asked with a lopsided grin.

Emma flinched, but managed to keep it from being too over the top. “We’re that predictable, huh?”

“When she’s done with being mayor, she might as well just be your deputy. Of course, then you’ll fire me and Mulan, which wouldn’t be cool,” he replied. Mulan came over in the Second Curse and was only a part-time deputy, but she came in handy when they needed help when Regina felt the threat was beneath her.

Emma laughed. “I’d never fire you, Dad. Regina would.”

David snickered. “With actual fire.”

“And a demented grin.”

“Definitely.”

Emma felt a little better and turned her attention to the scattered paperwork on her desk. She worked through the rest of the day and was surprised nothing stranger than what happened at lunch came up. But, then again, Regina being pregnant was pretty epic. What’s the plan now? Are we going to leave town to see a doctor? Is there a doctor in town Regina trusts?

Emma thought Whale was the best of the best as far as doctors went in town, but now she figured he was just who everyone was used to going to. And, why would Regina leave Whale as the best doctor in town? Regina hated Whale.

“Emma, you okay over there?” David called from by his desk. He was up with his coat in his hand.

“Yeah, fine. Why?”

He waved his coat her. “It’s time for patrol and you’re just sort of staring at the wall.”

Emma yelped. “Oh, sorry.” Damn, I hope we don’t run into anything really serious or I might be in trouble. My head is a million miles from here. She grabbed her coat and her hat.

David tilted his head a little as he studied her and gave her a small smile. “You sure you’re okay?”

“Yeah, fine. I just have to figure out how to approach a parenting thing with Regina. You know she likes to shoot me down without really hearing me out,” Emma said. She winced as the cold air outside hit them and they made their way to the patrol car. She made a beeline for the driver’s seat.
David shrugged, but his brow wrinkled as if he knew that did not sound right. Emma and Regina had been doing pretty good at the team parenting since Regina got over the whole “brought Robin’s dead wife back from the past” thing. Emma decided against saying anything, hoping silence and work would let the subject drop. It turned out that was the right thing to do. Soon, normal conversation picked up.

“So, I’ve been trying to talk your mother into going back to work soon,” David said.

“She just had a baby,” Emma pointed out.

“Okay, not right now soon, but maybe in a year soon. What do you think?”

Emma shook her head. “I think you should revisit that conversation far along down the line. I’m sure she took as to wanting her to go back to work right away.”

“I guess. I just don’t want her to let Neal become her whole world. We both keep making the same mistakes.”

Emma glanced at him, but made sure to keep her attention on the road. “Is this about me?”

David sighed and his shoulders slumped. “I don’t want… I just don’t want you to feel left out or forgotten ever again.”

Emma nodded. She and her parents had spoken about that topic during the quiet few weeks they had when Gold had been banished from town. There were a lot of tears on all of their parts, but she was certain they came out stronger for it. She definitely felt like a little piece of her was repaired, even though she believed she would have doubts and fears for a long time to come.

“I’m fine. Let Mom stay home with the kid while she can. She’s happy, right? And there’s still two incomes in the house thanks to me and you,” Emma pointed out. She and her father could support them for a while.

“Yeah, but you have Henry to think about, too,” David countered.

Emma nodded. “Yeah, but he also has Regina, so it should be okay.” But, then again, soon Regina is going to be supporting another one. What then?

Eventually, she and David split up patrolling. They liked to do an initial ride together, but then for the rest of the patrol time, they had separate cruisers. David liked to joke it was the only time he ever got to drive while at work.

While Emma was out, Regina texted her to pick up Henry. She had no doubt Regina was still trying to process being pregnant. Emma could not imagine what it had to be like to do something to her body and then have that something totally undone without her knowledge. How the hell did it get undone in the first place? Regina did not even have an answer for that one and Emma knew her imagination would rage and burn if she tried to figure it out. What if someone had used magic against Regina?

She stopped thinking about Regina, knowing she would zone out for the whole day if she allowed the news to plague her mind. She focused on patrolling, which was boring. The most she had to do was chase some Lost Boys, who seemed to think tagging public property was fun.

Eventually, Emma picked Henry up from school and drove him home. He did not question it and filled the ride talking about his day rather than asking questions about his mom. Emma was a little happy about that, not sure what she would tell him, if she should tell him anyway. Regina was
already home, sitting on the couch. There was a drink on the coffee table and Emma hoped to hell it was not alcoholic.

“Mom,” Henry let out a surprise squeak. His voice was changing and had a mind of its own in terms of pitch.

“Regina, shouldn’t you still be at your office?” Emma asked.

Regina shook her head, a small frown marring her face. “I needed a little time to think and lost track of time.” She turned to Henry. “Please, go do your homework.”

He did not need to be told twice. Emma went over to Regina while Henry disappeared upstairs. She sat down next to Regina.

“Doesn’t he usually do his homework down here?” Emma asked.

“I’m sure he knows I just want to talk to you,” Regina replied.

Emma nodded. “So, what’s up?”

“I made an appointment for tomorrow.”

“With a doctor?”

Regina’s brow wrinkled. “Yes, with a doctor. Who else would I make an appointment with? It’s not as if I need my tires checked.”

Emma held up her hands in surrender, knowing she had earned that. “It was obvious. It was obvious. Is your doctor in town?”

“Yes, she is. You said I’m not alone in this.”

“I’ll be there, Regina.”

Regina sat up a little straighter. “Yes, then we can put this nonsense to bed.”

Emma tilted her head a little. “You okay with this?” She nodded toward the glass.

“It’s apple juice.”

Emma breathed a sigh of relief, which earned her an arched eyebrow from Regina. Emma did not bother to address the sound. “I don’t mean just that. I mean, if you are, it means something happened here and you have no idea what it was.”

Regina shook her head. “I’ll study when I get a moment. I’m sure there’s an answer in my books somewhere. You know I’ve been trying to recall the exact potion I took, but it escapes me. It seems like it’s important. I should know the exact potion, so I can determine on my own why this could happen, but I can’t recall.” Her eyes searched the floor, as if it held the answers she sought.

Emma took a deep breath and then reached out, putting her hand on Regina’s knee. “It’ll be all right.”

Regina sighed, her shoulders slumping. “I’m sure this is just a mistake. I can’t see how it would be anything more than a mistake.” Her eyes told the truth, though. She was worried and maybe even a little frightened. Someone or something had gotten past her and Regina did not know how to handle it beyond pretending it did not bother her.
“It’s possible.” Anything was possible, after all, especially since there was magic all over the town. “I don’t get why you would take that potion, though. I mean, you adopted Henry. Why wouldn’t you want to have your own kids?” Emma asked.

Regina gave her a deadpan look. “You’ve met my mother.”

Emma’s forehead wrinkled. Okay, so she was trying to protect a kid from her mother, which I guess makes sense. Or does she mean she didn’t want to become her mother? Nah. If that was the case, she wouldn’t have adopted Henry. “Well, what about after, though? Didn’t you think she was dead at a point? You could’ve reversed it.”

Regina shook her head. “By then, I had one goal in life—the complete and utter destruction of Snow White. Nothing else mattered. I thought that would make me happy.” Brown eyes drifted to the stairs. “I was so very wrong.”

“No need to dwell in the past.” Emma knew the past led to madness.

“I know. Anyway, the appointment is at twelve fifteen. I’ll pick you up at noon.”

Emma nodded. “You’re going to go back to work?” Technically, Regina still had two hours of work left, just like Emma.

Regina glanced at the stairs again. “No, I don’t think I will, but your shift is not over, Sheriff.”

“Says the mayor playing hooky.”

Regina snickered a bit, but her eyes looked haunted. Emma gave her knee a little squeeze, hoping it would lift Regina’s spirits. It did not seem to do anything, but Emma knew from experience being there for Regina meant plenty. Regina was so used to going it alone and Emma wanted to be there for her because no one should have to do this alone.

Regina pulled up to the Sheriff’s station at twelve noon and marched in like a woman on a mission. Emma had a chocolate frosted donut hanging from her mouth when Regina pinned her with a rigid look. She made sure not to lose the donut and not to choke as she flashed Regina an apology smile. Regina folded her arms across her chest and seemed so tense that she might have been frozen in place.

“I do believe we have some place to be and you should be eating better than that for lunch,” Regina reprimanded her.

“Why you don’t scold him, too?” Emma motioned to her father, who had half of a donut shoved in his gob. He made a noise in the back of his throat when Regina turned to him. He shot Emma a look and she glanced away, wanting no part of whatever was about to go down between her father and Regina.

Regina sneered at David. “You should be setting a better example for your child and perhaps straighten out your diet, so both of you can live to old age.”

David’s eyes went wide. Regina turned to leave before he got a chance to respond. Emma chuckled and he glared at her. Emma shrugged and made sure to devour her donut in two bites while grabbing her coat before chasing after Regina. They got into Regina’s car and were on their way.

“So, who’s your doctor? Are there any more fairy tale or Disney characters I haven’t bumped into
yet?” Emma scratched her chin as she tried to think of who might be left. “What about Tod from The Fox and The Hound? That movie always makes me sad.”

Regina regarded her as if she had three heads. “Do you honestly think I’d allow a cartoon fox to examine me?”

Emma swallowed down a comment about Regina allowing a cartoon fox doing a lot more than examining her. She’d probably throw my ass out of the car if I said that. “No, probably not. Well, what about Pocahontas? Haven’t seen her yet.”

“Possibly because she was an actual person from this realm.”

Emma nodded. “And so was Mulan, but here she is.” Regina blinked and glanced at Emma. “You look shocked that I know that.”

Regina nodded. “I am a little shocked that you know that.”

Snorting, Emma rolled her eyes. “You’re hating on my prison GED? Anyway, who’s left?”

“You do realize not everyone in the Enchanted Forest was a fairy tale or Disney character, yes? There were a few who got their lives misinterpreted into stories here, but there were thousands of people there and thousands more in surrounding territories and countries,” Regina pointed out.

“She’s a fairy tale character, isn’t she?” Emma smiled a little.

Regina groaned. “Must you be this way with me?”

“I get to let my hair down with you, especially when you’re not really upset with me. I’ll guess if you want me to, even though that’s more Henry’s department. Maybe I should just call him and ask him. I mean, it’s not like you let Whale be his primary care physician, right?”

Regina looked at her as if she were insane. “Do you honestly think I would let that quack Whale within a mile of our son? Even under the Curse, I would only go to him if I needed someone right away, which was not very often.”

“So, is your doctor, like, Meg from Hercules or something?”

Regina gave her a deadpan look. “If you’re not going to take this seriously, there’s no need for you to come.”

“I’ll be good. I’m just trying to use humor to loosen you up some.” Emma doubted she had ever seen Regina drive like she was strangling the steering wheel.

“It’s not helping. I know you’re overcompensating.”

Emma sighed and ran her hand through her hair. “I’m sorry. I just want to calm you down. You seem tense.”

Regina just frowned. The rest of the ride, which was not long, was spent in silence. They drove to Regina’s neighborhood, the high class end of town, and pulled up to a building Emma knew vaguely in passing. It was clean, brick, with large windows in the front. It never occurred to her that it was a doctor’s office. Regina pulled into a parking lot and put the car in a spot at the end, as if she were hiding it.

“I never knew this was a doctor’s office,” Emma said.
“There are several specialists here, as well as Henry’s pediatrician if you truly want to meet him. I honestly can’t believe you thought the town only had one doctor.” Regina shook her head.

Emma frowned. “He’s the only who we go to when something happens.”

“No, he’s who you and your parents go to. If anyone bothered to consult me, we would employ someone more competent and less likely to betray us at first glance.”

“So, it’s not Doctor Moreau or Doctor Strange or…”

Regina sighed. “Please, stop.”

Emma held up her hands in surrender. I’ll be serious. Silly is not helping at all. On the way in, Emma saw several names on the door. Which one would they be seeing? Which was one was the Mills’ family doctor? Regina went to the receptionist desk.

“I’m here to see Doctor Alexander,” Regina said.

“Oh, yes, Miss Mills. Please, give the doctor a moment,” the receptionist replied with a smile. Emma held in a surprised wince. She was not used to people just being openly polite to Regina most of the time, even now. Many of the townsfolk continued to nurse a grudge over the Curse.

Regina just nodded and went to sit down in the empty waiting area. Emma followed her. The waiting area was nice and comfortable, much better than Storybrooke General. She was about to take in the decor for lack of a better thing to do, but noticed Regina’s leg bouncing. She put her hand on Regina’s knee and Regina gasped.

“Not cool?” Emma asked.

Regina shook her head, eyes focused straight ahead. “No, it’s fine.”

“I’m not sure what to say to you.” Emma tried to think of what she wanted someone, anyone to tell her when she found she was pregnant. She had already told Regina it would be okay, which was all she really wanted to hear back then.

“Nothing. You don’t have to say anything.”

Emma nodded. She knew that, but she wanted to say something supportive. The only problem was that she was not sure how Regina felt about the pregnancy. No, she did not seem super thrilled, but she had not immediately gone through a list of options either. Regina had been rather blank beyond insisting it was not possible and it was a mistake. Is she in denial and if she is, why? Thankfully, before Emma let her mouth get the better of her, Regina was called in for the doctor.

Emma went with her, of course, ignoring the stares from the receptionist. Regina walked by the woman like everything was normal, so Emma did the same thing. They entered the small room with Emma closing the door behind them. The doctor, a pale, middle-aged woman with greying hair in a white lab coat, was seated at the table in the room with a chart. The examination table was opposite her, but Regina did not make a move toward it.

“Regina, I’m surprised to see you. You already had your yearly exam,” the doctor said without looking up.

“This is for a more… recent concern,” Regina said.

The doctor glanced up and her eyes went wide the moment she noticed Emma. “Is this appointment
actually for the sheriff? I heard tales she was consorting with pirate.”

Emma winced. “Okay, I’m just here for moral support. As for consorting with a pirate, that’s over and it never went that far. I’ve seen enough *Pirates of the Caribbean* movies, after all.” She did not even want to imagine what the hell that region of Hook looked like or what type of itching or infections she would have walked away with if it had gone that far.

Regina smiled a little, but quickly straightened her features. “You mean to tell me you and the good captain never even consummated your so-called relationship?”

“Me and the good captain had a lot of differences of opinion that came out when we had six weeks of nothing happening. Then, he wasn’t too happy with how interested I was in making sure you were okay when you were undercover and the icing on the cake was how pissed he was that I shoved the dagger into the Darkness for you. Apparently, I was supposed to just let the mother of my kid and friend die.”

Regina grunted; well, if ladies grunted anyway. Emma knew that to mean, “I’m sure that was his attitude if you recall, he was the one who handed me over to two people who tortured me.” Regina had it blurted out a couple of weeks at one point when she felt Emma was talking a little too much about Hook. Emma did not really hold that against Hook. After all, who had not wanted to torture Regina a little bit at one point in time, especially before Regina was an ally? But, his carefree attitude about letting Regina, Emma’s friend, partner, and the mother of her son, die hit a lot harder.

Emma show the thoughts away. “Anyway, can we get to this? This isn’t about me.”

Regina arched an eyebrow quickly. “Of course it’s not about you.” She turned to the doctor. “I would like a blood test done.”

“A blood test?” Doctor Alexander echoed. Regina gave her a hard look and she nodded. “Ah, a blood test. I was unaware there was anyone, your Majesty.”

“There isn’t anyone.” Regina’s tone was clipped.

Doctor Alexander’s brow furrowed and she glanced at Emma again. “So, this is magic?”

“It might as well be.”

The doctor squinted a little. “I’m not sure I understand, but I might not have to. Let’s do the blood work and go from there.” Emma was glad she was not the only one who did not understand what the heck was going on.

“Please.”

Emma stood back and quiet the whole time. Regina looked like she might have a nervous breakdown, though. She took her coat off and sat on the examination table. She pressed her hands, which remained in their fashionable leather gloves, together until her arms shook. Doctor Alexander did not say anything about it and just did her job. She drew the blood and then disappeared into an adjacent room. Emma went and put both of her hands over Regina’s.

“You’re not alone in this,” Emma reminded her.

“What if…” Regina’s voice was low and shaky. She shook her head. “I still don’t understand how this could have happened. It has to be magic. What if Rumple pulled something? Or one of the fairies? The Curse is still fresh in everyone’s minds. What if this is revenge?”
Emma made an effort to keep her face passive. She did not want to make any sort of expression to upset Regina. The fairies seemed to be fairly busy making sure nothing else in the Author’s Mansion could destroy them and Rumple seemed dead set on getting Belle to forgive him. Both seemed to be working with limited success.

“How would this work if it was revenge? Why would anyone want to force a pregnancy on you of all things?” Emma asked. Who would think of revenge like that?

Regina shook her head again. “I’m grasping at straws, I suppose.”

“It’ll be all right. Don’t worry about it. It will be all right. Do you want to go back to work and wait to hear the results or are you going to go home?”

Regina sighed. “I have to go back to work. I left too much incomplete yesterday. I’ll return you to work as well.”

Emma nodded. “Will you… I mean, you’ll tell me when the doctor calls, right?” The test results were likely to be back that day, the doctor told them.

Regina gave her a look that called her an idiot. Emma threw her hands up. It was not like Regina was always an open book, after all.

“Yes, I will tell you. In fact, I’ll call you right after I get the call,” Regina stated.

Emma smiled. “Thank you.”

-8-8-8-8-

David wanted to know what Emma and Regina had done for lunch. He had not outright asked, but he kept staring at Emma. She did some much needed paperwork, making sure to make a show of it, to avoid talking to him about. She needed to think of a plausible lie to tell David and she did not want to use Henry.

“Regina and I are friends, you know,” Emma decided to go with. It was annoying her that he kept looking at her as if she were some kind of freak.

“Hey, I didn’t say anything,” David replied.

“No, but you keep looking over here. We went out for lunch. Friends do that.” Hell, there were times when she brought lunch to Regina.

David nodded. “They do. This is the first time you’ve done it, though. I mean, the first time you’ve done it and it’s not to keep her from stressing out over our daily impending doom as she tries to help solve the problem.”

“That you know of,” Emma replied, just to be a smart-ass.

His face lit up with childish glee. “Oh, so you’ve done it before, but didn’t tell anyone? Is that why you broke up with Hook?”

Emma shot him a look. “Really?”

David threw his hands up. “Hey, I’m just trying to figure this out. I know you and Regina are friends and you do stuff together. I just didn’t know those things involve lunch now when things are calm and collected.”
Emma groaned. “Look, I almost turned into the Dark One for that woman. The least she can do is buy me lunch every now and again.” It was true to the point where Emma would have to bring it up when Regina was herself again. Surely almost absorbing pure evil for a person had to be worth at least a lifetime supply grilled cheese and bear claws.

“And maybe not scold us for eating donuts.”

Emma grinned. “I think you’re asking for too much there.”

David chuckled and that was the end of that. He went back to work and she went back to work. They went out on patrol and Emma got a call from Regina. She assumed it would be to pick up Henry again, but then also knew it could be about the other thing.

“What am I going to tell Henry?” Regina’s voice broke. Wow, that was fast.

“Don’t worry. You’re not alone.” No, Emma had no idea what they would tell Henry, but they would figure it out together.

-8-8-8-8-

Next time: They have to tell Henry and he has to react.
“Hey, you ready to go home?” David said, snapping his fingers in front of Emma’s face.

Emma blinked. “Huh?” Her mind was a million miles away… Well, no. More a few hundred feet away, at Town Hall. Regina was pregnant.

“You ready to go home?” David repeated.

Emma shook her head. “Nah. I’m gonna go see Regina.”

David frowned. “You’re spending a lot of time with her.”

“No. She invited me to dinner and you know I get to spend time with the kind.” It was not a lie. Regina invited Emma to dinner. Emma knew it was to drop the bomb on Henry that his mom was pregnant.

David nodded. “Tell Henry I say hi.”

“I will.”

David left for home and Emma sighed, scratching her forehead. There were other things to tell Henry and Emma wondered how he would take the news. She could not picture it even as she ended up on the doorstep of mansion on Mifflin street and Henry was the one to let her in. Henry seemed suspicion already, watching her from the moment she came through the door. Emma stared right back.

“What? Your mom asked me over,” Emma said as anxiety ripped through her at breakneck speed. She felt a sweat bead trail down her cheek and her muscles felt locked into place. Why does everyone act like it’s the weirdest thing ever when I hang out with Regina? We save the town together and we even had an operation together with Henry no less. This is not weird!

“I know, which is weird,” Henry replied, like he read her thoughts and wanted her to know how wrong she was. “I get that you two have a weird friendship and you’re closer than I gave you credit for, but it doesn’t usually extend to house visits.”

“Which is a shame and an oversight to be corrected,” Regina said as she stepped into the living room. She regarded them with an almost bored expression, which made it seem like she was trying too hard to be normal. “Henry, I would have thought you’d like the idea of your mother having dinner with us.”

Henry frowned a little and squared his shoulders. “Of course I’m happy. It’s just a little weird. Is this going to be a regular thing?”
Regina glanced at Emma, who gave a causal shrug. “I’m hoping it will be.” Regina’s voice was low, but it held promise.

Emma smiled a little and Regina did the same. Emma wanted Regina to see, believe, and understand that she was in it for the long haul. She would be there for as long as Regina needed her. Not even as long as Regina wanted her, but needed her.

“Henry, go wash up.” Regina shooed him away with a flick of her wrist.

Henry looked at them for a long moment, but then trotted off to obey. Emma exhaled loudly as he disappeared upstairs and let her shoulders drop. Regina regarded her with an arched eyebrow.

“I felt like was holding a bomb!” Emma hissed, making tight fists. Her shirt stuck to parts of her thanks to her sweat.

Regina shook her head. “And you look like it. Try not to act so guilty. This is my mistake, not yours.”

Emma’s face shifted and her tension returned ten fold. “Mistake? Is that what you think? How you feel?” She hoped that was not the case. No kid needed to come into the world with a parent who felt like it was a mistake.

Regina scowled and folded her arms across her stomach. She shifted and wiggled a little. “Of course not. The action was a mistake, not the current situation. Now, my plan is to tell Henry after dinner. For the sake of our sanity, act as if I’m just telling you as well.”

Emma wiped the sweat from her brow and shook her head. “No way. You know how that kid is with lying. The second he finds out I knew from the start and didn’t say anything, he’ll hate us both because he’ll think we both lied to him by omission.”

With a sigh, Regina nodded. “This is quite true. Fine. I will tell him and then we can go from there.”

“Sounds fair. Do you know what you’re going to say?” Emma had no idea what to say or even how to react. She hoped Henry took things well or she felt like she would come apart at the seams. And I’m not even the one who’s pregnant!

Regina glanced away and twisted her mouth up momentarily. “I haven’t gotten that far. I barely believe this myself. I just don’t want to keep it from him. Like you said, the moment he thinks we’re lying, he’ll hate us both.”

“How do you think he’ll take it?”

Regina’s jaw moved, but she did not say anything. Dread bubbled in Emma’s stomach. Henry was pretty mature now. Surely, he would take the news well. He probably would not mind being a bit brother. Right, just like you don’t mind being a big sister. Well, she really did not, not now anyway.

Emma did not have a chance to dwell on those thoughts. Henry returned, smelling like all of the hand soap in the bathroom. Regina did not comment on it and Emma decided to ignore it. They went and had a rather odd, tense dinner. Emma hardly tasted the food as she shoved bits of it in her mouth. Henry looked between them, like he expected them to say something, but he did not do anything to fill the silence for more minutes than Emma liked.

“Are you guys okay?” Henry asked, his voice wobbling a little and it had nothing to do with puberty.
“Yes. Why do you ask?” Regina countered.

Henry frowned and his forehead wrinkled as he stared at them. “You’re being weird. I mean, usually, you guys talk to each other, even if it’s just to take shots at each other. Did something happen? Is this dinner like a really bad apology?”

Regina arched an eyebrow. “Meaning I did something I need to apologize for?”

“No.” Henry shook his head. “Not like that. Look, this is just weird. What’s going on? Like I said, usually, you guys at least talk to each other or ask me stuff. You’re staring into your food and I think Emma ate straight through to the table with how far her face is buried in her plate. What’s going on?”

Emma looked up, mouth full of pork chops. She glanced at Regina and gave a bit of a nod. Regina shook her head. Emma leaned a little harder, nodding more.

Regina huffed. “Did we not just make a plan? What is the point of having a plan if we’re not going to follow through?”

Emma shrugged. They had not really made a plan. Besides, even if they did, the best thing here would be to do it as soon as they had an opening. She would have said that, but she was almost certain Regina would gut her if she talked with her stuffed.

“All right, that’s it. What’s going on?” Henry stared back and forth between them, Regina at the head of the table and Emma across from him. Emma quickly swallowed her food.

“Nothing is going on,” Emma said. “You sound really suspicious.”

Henry used his index finger to drew a circle around the table. “This is really suspicious.”

“So, I can’t have dinner with you and your mom?” Emma inquired. *Right, the kid thinks I’m permanently in the dog house with Regina over the Robin Hood thing.*

“It’s not that you can’t. It’s that you don’t,” Henry stated, making a chopping motion with both hands.

The statement was kind of blunt and hit Emma like a bat. It was like an accusation of something, but she was not sure. *Is it my fault we don’t do this?* Regina had never invited her over casually for a meal and she could not just storm the gates or she would end up in more trouble. *Does Henry want me to be in the doghouse permanently?*

“ Enough,” Regina barked. Taking a deep breath to the point that her shoulders hitched up, she turned her full attention to Henry and regarded him with all the bearings of a queen. “There is something.”

“Does it have to do with you being sick?” Henry asked, glaring at his mother, daring her to keep secrets from him.

“It does,” Regina replied.

Henry flinched and his face morphed, eyes going wide, eyebrows shooting up, and mouth gaping. He looked like he had been hit with a truck. Emma reached across the table at the same time as Regina reached for him. They grabbed a hand each and Henry held on for dear life.

“It’s nothing bad, Henry,” Regina said.
“Your mom is okay, kid,” Emma promised.

Henry stared at Regina with watery eyes. His hands gripped tightly and shook. “You’re not dying, right? No one cursed you or anything, right?”

“I’m not dying. I have no idea if I have been cursed or not.” Regina probably felt like that sometimes, like her life had been cursed. “But, my illness has a cause.”

“What happened?” he asked in a tiny voice. Emma imagined it was how he sounded as a toddler. She could vaguely remember it from the memories Regina gave her what seemed like a lifetime ago.

“I’m pregnant,” Regina answered. It was blunt, but a whisper.

“Pregnant?” Henry squinted as if he did not know what the word meant.

“Your mom is going to have a baby,” Emma said.

“I know what pregnant is,” Henry huffed and then he glared at Emma as if she wronged him. “How in the world are you even pregnant?” He tossed their hands away to put his own over his ears. “No, don’t even tell me!” He pushed away from the table. “What does this even mean? Why is this happening? Is it because of Robin Hood?” He turned his glare at Regina, like she was a villain, like she was the Evil Queen again.

“Henry,” Regina said his name like a plea, a benediction. Now, her eyes were wet and her bottom lip quivered just enough to be noticed.

Emma got out her seat, already seeing the meltdown was imminent. She just was not sure who she should go to — mother or son. Henry’s face was red and his eyes glistened, tears readying to fall. Regina’s mouth trembled, like she was about to burst out bailing. She swallowed and the way her throat moved, it was like she gulped down a huge stone.

“The baby is Robin’s,” Regina confirmed.

Henry threw up his hands and let out some ungodly beast-like noise. “So all that crap is just going to start again? You’re going to throw everything away for him? Go crawling back to him? Have a real family with him?” His voice cracked as he screamed and pounded his fists on the table, rattling the dishes. The tears came and flooded down his face.

“No, Henry. No!” Regina insisted, climbing to her feet. “I would never—”

“You did!” Henry roared and stomped his foot as he gnashed his teeth. “You wouldn’t even let me in the house! Is this your wish come true? You finally have a kid that’s really yours with your stupid soul mate?” Henry’s face was a mess, tears burning their way down his brick red cheeks and his nose ran like it was training for a marathon. “You go ahead and have your stupid real family!” He bolted and Regina burst into gut wrenching sobs.

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“Henry!” Regina reached out for him, but he pulled away, making sure to run wherever the hell he thought he was going. Thankfully, he made a beeline for the stairs instead of the front door.

“Regina, let him go,” Emma said, stepping over to Regina. She put her arm around Regina’s shoulders, giving her a mini-hug to help her keep it together. To her surprise, Regina fell against her and continued to bawl her eyes out. Two days in a row. Must be the pregnancy hormones. If not, Emma would start watching for the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.

“I would never!” Regina wept, clutching Emma’s arms.
“He knows that. This was just a lot to take in at first. He’s still a little sore from what happened before.”

Regina shook her head. “I didn’t talk to him enough about it. I apologized and explained I wasn’t in a good head space, but that wasn’t enough.”

Emma’s hand moved without her permission and rubbed comforting circles on Regina’s back. “I’m sure it was. This was just the news hitting him. I mean, how did you take it when you got the news? I mean, when you got the news confirmed.”

Regina was silent, but the look in her eyes was haunted. Emma was not sure what it meant, but she decided not to push. She wished she had been there when Regina got the call. She would have been able to support Regina then.

“You want me to go talk to him?” Emma asked.

“No, not yet. Maybe I should talk to him. I am the one with the situation and the history of shutting him out.”

“You can talk to him, but what you have to remember is I know all about the Second Kid.”

Regina shook her head. “This is different.”

“I know it is and I can just help prep him and get him to understand the baby isn’t here to replace him. You’re not having the baby because you want a biological kid to raise or anything like that,” Emma explained. “Wait, you are having the baby, right? You never really said if you were or not.” It did not help that Regina seemed muted about it so far.

Regina scoffed as best she could with tears pouring down her face. “Would I have told Henry if I were not planning to see this all the way through?”

“Right. That makes sense. This didn’t…” Emma was not sure what she wanted to say. Her stomach quivered and for a second she feared she would lose all of the dinner she wolfed down. What if Henry’s reaction made Regina change her mind? She knew Regina would do anything for Henry and his happiness, even if it meant getting an abortion, giving the child up for adoption, or leaving the baby with Robin and having no contact after that. She did not even want to imagine Robin raising Regina’s baby with Marian. Would Marian even let that happen?

Regina sniffled. “No, I’ve told him now. I understand he’s upset, but who in their right mind would abort a child because her son didn’t want her to have a child? I don’t even want to think of the therapy we’d all need if I made that decision.”

Emma nodded. Sounded logical enough. “Anyway, let me lay the foundation and then you can talk to him, okay? I think it’s best for him to get that you’re not replacing him before understanding why you’re going to have a baby and why that doesn’t change your circumstances and you’re not running off with Robin Hood.”

“Very much, no. I would never in my life make that mistake twice.” Regina seemed to make it her business to avoid Robin Hood after she saved Marian and he decided to try to save his marriage. “Elephants will fly first.”

“No even with magical feathers?”

Regina glared at her, but it did not have its usual flare. “No, not even with non-magical feathers or a questionable murder of crows.”
“Of course you’d bring up murder.” Emma grinned briefly. “So, not your soul mate and I shouldn’t be on the look out for Dumbo? You hated me for nothing?” She gave Regina a little smile, hoping the teasing would change her mood.

Regina scoffed. “I didn’t hate you. I just needed to reexamine my life, my fate, and my decision to stop disliking you.”

Emma chuckled. “So hated?”

“No. Hatred would involve making baked goods containing magical ingredients.”

“Oh, right. That is what hatred looks like. Why is hatred so tasty, though?”

Regina laughed through her nose and shoved away from Emma. “You’re awful.”

Emma gave her a lopsided grin. Smiling came easy around Regina, even now during a stressful time, and whenever Emma noticed, she wondered why. When did I get so comfortable with her? “You know you like it. Look, let’s give Henry a minute to breath and get his act together. I’m going to eat his pork chops and then go talk to him.”

Regina sucked her teeth and playfully slapped at her elbow. “You leave his food alone. I made more than enough.”

“I know. Can I have the extra? It’ll keep me from eating donuts for lunch.” That was a good selling point, right?

Russet eyes rolled. “Well, if that’s the case, how can I say no?”

Emma flashed Regina a broader grin and Regina smiled a little. They sat back down, but Regina did not really touch her food again. Emma finished off everything on her plate and then took Regina’s hand. She felt the urge to kiss it, but held off. That would probably be weird and definitely too much.

“It’ll be okay,” Emma promised.

Regina glanced at the ceiling. “What if he used this time to run off?”

“If he was going to run away, he would’ve done it when he stormed off. It would’ve been the exclamation mark on how pissed he was. He would’ve gotten to slam the door and everything. He needs time to process, but he’s not going to bolt on you because of this. We’ve got a good kid there, Regina.”

Regina nodded. “I’ll pack up the leftovers.”

“And I’ll go see about our man-child.”

Emma took a deep breath before braving upstairs. Henry was in his room if the light meant anything. The door was even open, but Emma knocked anyway.

“Go away,” Henry huffed.

“Why? You’re going to have to see me eventually,” Emma pointed out. She stepped in fully to see him sitting at his window, staring into the night. His room was clean and organized, which would have been surprising if his mother was not Regina Mills.

Henry scoffed. “Not really. At any given moment, you might just decide to leave.”
Emma withered inside a little. *He’s upset. Don’t let him get to you.* “Henry, you know that’s not true anymore.”

Henry turned to glare at her with enough fire Regina would have been proud and he made a sharp, sweeping motion with his hand. “Just two months ago you were talking about moving back to New York, like none of this was your family or my family.”

“Well, that decision was made in the heat of the moment at a very bad moment.” When Emma finally had time to think about it, there was no way in hell she would move back to New York, so she knew it would be a cold day in Hell before Henry went back with her. She had just been so fed up with the magical crap and the chaos of Storybrooke.

Henry ground his teeth. “And what happens when the next bad moment comes?”

“Me and your mom will punch it in the face,” she remarked. She could not run. She could not leave her family behind and she knew they would always stand and fight.

“Mom won’t be able to do anything. She’s pregnant, so you’ll be on your own.”

Emma had not thought of that. But, yeah, there was no way she would be okay with Regina facing down some Big Bad while pregnant. Emma would be on her own the next time some crazy magic whatever showed up. Well, she would not have a piece of the team.

“Not true. I still have my mom and Dad. Mulan is here to help. Maybe Ruby will step up and be the magic support while Regina’s down for the count. Maleficent and Tinker Bell are there, too, if I ask nicely enough. Maybe if I get down on my hands and knees and beg, Lily might even help. But, that doesn’t matter. What you really want to talk about is the fact that your mom is pregnant.”

“With stupid Robin Hood’s baby,” he sneered.

“He is pretty stupid, but is that really why you’re upset?” Emma asked.

Henry growled and turned back to the window. “It’s stupid.”

“What’s stupid? We both know you’re better with words than this.” The way he was speaking proved the news had hit him hard and he was jumbled up inside.

“I just wanna cuddle him, but I doubt that will help.”

Henry shook his head. “She’s stupid. After you saved Marian from dying, from being executed by her no less, she was upset with you because Robin left her and went back to his wife. Then, she shuts us all out, like it’s our faults! Does she even realize she wouldn’t have had Robin in the first place if she hadn’t executed his wife?”

“Henry,” Emma said. She did not think that was fair, even though it was accurate in a sense. Regina did not want Robin, though, and Henry needed to understand that.

“Oh, so now we’re just going to excuse her behavior in the Enchanted Forest because it was over there?” he asked, waving his arms.

“No, we’re not excusing it. It’s been acknowledged and we all know she’s working on being a better person. She’s working on doing the right thing and has stuck her neck out there for a lot of people who don’t even like her, so let’s not pretend this is the same woman from the Enchanted Forest. I’ve met the Evil Queen. There’s something missing in the eyes compared to Regina. The Evil Queen… there was no love, compassion, no empathy, or even connection to other human beings. You know Regina isn’t like that.”
Henry scowled. “Yeah, well, now she’s connected to stupid Robin Hood. They can be their stupid real family.”

“Henry, you know you’re Regina’s family. I think you’re projecting a bit.”

He sucked his teeth and regarded her like she was small, looking her up and down. “Oh, now you’re Archie?”

Emma frowned. “I know you’re upset, but remember, I’m your mother.”

“For like two years.”

“Henry!” she barked, fixing him a hard look as she folded her arms across her chest. The hell? “You might be upset, but you will not speak me to any way you want!” She never thought she would need to say that to him, but she was putting her foot down. After having him for a year, she understood when she first met him, she had not been very motherly toward him. Now, she knew how to be a mother, a parent, and she would not let him act like a brat, regardless of the situation.

Henry flinched. “Sorry…” he grumbled.

“Look, I know when you first came looking for me, you wanted a connection to your biological family. We both know I know what that’s like. We also both know I know what it’s like when your parents have a kid way after you, but there’s a huge difference between what happened with me and what’s happening to you.”

“How is it different?”

Emma sighed and sat down on the edge of his bed, close to him, but still with space between them. “Did I tell you what happened in Neverland?”

Glancing away, he pursed his lips. “Some stuff, but not a lot. Neverland seemed like a nightmare for all of us.”

“It damn sure was that. But, at one point, my mom actually said she regretted she didn’t raise me. She didn’t regret it for me. She regretted it for herself. It had nothing to do with my crappy childhood or being cut off from any family or not having anyone to help me ever. It boiled down to her not being able to raise a baby and then she got pregnant.”

Henry winced. “Really?”

“Yeah, really. You can imagine how I felt. Regina didn’t do that to you.”

“But, this is a baby with her soul mate.”

“I think she would disagree about him being her soul mate. This is her baby, just like you’re her baby. Has Regina ever once made you feel like you were anything less than her son? She damn near killed me for you!”

“It was for her Curse.”

Emma stared at him. “You really think this whole thing between us was about just her Curse? It was about you. Maybe it started out with her seeing you as just hers, like a possession, but even that’s something. You’re the reason Regina’s changed and evolved and become this whole new, better person. You’re the reason she’s behaving like an adult instead of a spoiled kid. She’s never once looked at you as anything less than the person she loves most in the world. She gave you up twice
for your own safety. Hell, the first time, because she didn’t trust herself if David tells it right. She’s willing to do anything to protect you, even take on a god… or whatever the hell Peter Pan was.”

Henry sighed and ran his hand through his hair. “I guess.”

“Henry, your mother would never and could never replace you. You hold a special place in her heart. She swallowed up a death curse because you asked her to. This woman ripped out Peter freaking Pan’s heart for you. She turned into a hero for who? Not this town. Not me. It was you.”

Henry stared at her, studied her, as if he was drinking in and absorbing her words. “Then what’s the deal with her having baby?”

Emma rubbed her forehead. “It’s not something she did to spite you.”

“It’s an accident baby, isn’t it?”

Emma was taken aback by that and gawked at her son. “What the hell do you know about accident babies? Who are your friends?”

He gave her one of those smart-ass kid looks, like he knew everything there ever was to possibly know. “I’m in middle school, Emma, and we lived in New York.”

Emma turned her mouth up. “Right, we did. You didn’t smoke while we were in New York, did you?”

Henry’s face twisted up. “Uh, no.”

“That’s good. So, your mom won’t totally kill me. Maybe just maim me if I let her think I told you the baby was an accident. Look, the point is that your mom didn’t plan this and she’s actually really scared.”

Henry blinked. “She is?”

“Henry, she’s leaning on me. That ought to tell you something.” They both knew Regina would not accept help, even from Emma, unless she was terrified out of her mind. *I just need Henry to think about that.*

He shook his head. “I know at first I made it seem like you guys aren’t close, but I’m pretty sure you’re Mom’s best friend. She might not say it, but she cares about you, Emma.”

Emma shrugged. “It’s not really news to me. She acted as bait for a demon-god thing to save me, so I think I get it. And, I’m here to help her. I’m here to help you, too. If you have any problems with this, then you can talk to me. Like I said, I know a lot about replacement babies. I also know what it’s like to long for family. The only thing is, kid, you have a family. This is it and the new baby is just adding onto that. You’ll be a kick ass big brother.”

Henry snickered. “Mom will kill you if you keep swearing in front me.”

“This is why we don’t tell her. Look, you can be upset. This is life-changing news, but don’t be mad at your mom. She wasn’t planning this. She didn’t do this to hurt you and she isn’t planning to leave you. She wants you just the same as always. You’re her…” Emma searched her memory for the nickname she never called Henry, but for some reason was in her false memories.

Henry smiled. “Little prince.”
“Right, her little prince. She loves you, Henry, and that’s always going to be the case.”

Henry inhaled deeply. “I know.”

Of course he knew. How could he miss how much his mom loved him? Emma was glad he was able to admit it, though. “Then, you need to go talk to her. She’s messed up enough over this baby thing. You being pissed at her isn’t good for her. Plus, don’t you want to be big brother? We both know you’ll be awesome at it.”

Henry grinned. “You don’t have to flatter me. You got me already.”

Emma smiled and Henry hopped to his feet. He hugged her as thanks and then made his way out the room. Emma slowly followed him downstairs. She stopped short of the kitchen where Regina was, rinsing dishes. She took a glance and saw Henry hugged Regina. She did not listen in on what he said to Regina, affording them their privacy. After a few minutes, Henry trotted out with panic in his eyes.

“She’s crying and I don’t know what to do. I apologized and she started crying. A hug actually made her cry more and then I said I was looking forward to being a big brother and she cried more. I dunno what to do. Mom doesn’t cry,” Henry said, bouncing on his toes and flapping his arms.

Emma patted him on the shoulder. “You’re a good kid, Henry Mills. I got the emotional bundle of pregnant woman now. Oh, and you might want to get used to her crying. This might be her thing.”

Henry sighed, dropping his head a little. “I’m not old enough to deal with this stuff.”

Emma laughed as she dared to enter the kitchen. Regina was definitely crying by the sink. Emma eased on, standing close. She resisted the urge to pull Regina into a hug. She was not sure if their friendship had reached that point. Sure, Regina could initiate contact, but she had an excuse. Emma did not want to do anything that might spook Regina.

“You okay?” Emma asked.

Regina sniffled and a small smile painted her features. “He’s okay with it. He doesn’t think I’m leaving. I told him I was done with Robin Hood, regardless of what happens between him and Marian. I’m done.”

Emma nodded and wondered if Henry brought up the things he said upstairs. She would not bring it up. She did not want to travel that road again. She would just check in with Henry later to make sure he was not pretending to be all right.

“Do you mind if I ask you something personal?” Emma said.

“You’ve accompanied me to my OBGYN, Emma.”

“Yeah, but that was just to draw blood. I was just curious how far along you are with the baby.” It was also a way to pinpoint when the hell Regina slept with Robin. She was not judging or anything, but Regina’s reaction to her bringing back Marian had always perplexed her. Regina made it seem like she and Robin had enjoyed a long, comfortable relationship, but then when it was all said and done, Regina did not want to talk about him anymore and he seemed quite content to stay the hell away from Regina.

Regina wiped her eyes. “Really?”

“Yeah. I mean, how long have you been throwing up in the mornings?”
Regina shook her head. “Ask what you really want to ask.”

Emma winced. *Do I really want to ask when she fucked Robin and end up thrown off the Grand Canyon?* “Maybe later. Right now, I just want to make sure you’re okay. Henry said he apologized and he’s ready to be a big brother. Are you okay then?”

Regina nodded. “I am as all right as I will be for now. He did want to make sure I wasn’t planning to suddenly move in with Robin, which we all know is impossible.”

“Well, a baby might put you over the top.”

Regina shook her head. “I have very little desire to bother with Robin in capacity. Thank you for talking to Henry.”

Emma stood up a little taller. “What do I keep telling you?”

“I know, I know. I’m not alone in this.”

“You’re not and now we’ve added Henry to this. I think it’s safe to say this is going to be easy.” Just as Emma said that, Regina’s color suddenly drained from her face and she rushed off. Her morning sickness decided to turn into evening sickness as well.

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Next time: they tell Robin and Marian.
4: Into the Woods

Emma found herself over Regina’s house early in the morning. Regina had texted her, asking if she could get Henry ready for school. Apparently, beyond morning sickness, now smells got to Regina, too, and smelling butter while making breakfast had sent her to the bathroom for longer than she expected. Emma showed up with breakfast from Granny’s for Henry, who was getting ready on his own.

“I think we need to talk to your mom about acknowledging you can do a lot of stuff without parental supervision now,” Emma said as Henry shouldered his book bag.

Henry shrugged. “I keep trying to tell her I’m okay, but she won’t listen. I don’t know how much of this is my unfortunate habit of getting kidnapped by bad guys or her because she’s always been a bit of a helicopter mom.”

“It’s probably a little bit of both. I guess we can sit down with her when she’s not living in the toilet and talk about it,” Emma said.

Henry nodded. “Sounds good. She shouldn’t stress over me anyway. That’s not good for the baby, right?”

“It is not. Well, let me tell her I’ll see you to the bus stop and find out if she’s finished throwing up all of her vital organs.”

“Are you going to make jokes like that while you do it? It might upset her.”

Emma scoffed and squared her shoulders with pride. “Your mom loves my jokes. She just likes to pretend she doesn’t.”

Henry scrunched up his face. “I feel like no.”

“Trust me. She digs the jokes.”

Henry rolled his eyes and Emma smiled. She marched to the bathroom on the first floor; Regina had not been able to make up to her private one. She knocked and Regina moaned loud enough for her to hear, so maybe it was a response.

“You okay in there?” Emma called.

“Fine. It’s just…” Regina groaned. “It’s like the smell invaded my entire skull.”

“Is it getting better?”
“I think I need to give it time to fade. I have to call into the office and let my assistant know I’ll be late. Is Henry ready?”

“Yeah, he got ready all on his own, you know? I’m taking him to the bus. Once he’s on, I’ll come back, okay?”

“You don’t have to.”

“I know I don’t.” But, she was already up and out and her parents had looked at her weird when she left the apartment so early. She might as well make the most of it.

With that, Emma was gone with Henry. Henry took one last glance in the direction of the bathroom before they were out the door, blasted by the cold, damp air. It looked like it might rain. Emma clapped Henry on the shoulder.

“She’ll be fine,” Emma assured him.

“Were you that sick with me?” he asked.

“Definitely and mine was all day and I was in prison, so it sucked a lot. Your mom might be one of those people who lose it after a few months. I will say I was lucky with that.”

Henry nodded, but he frowned slightly and looked down as if he was searching for something. “It’s hard seeing her sick, even if I know it’s because she’s…” He looked around, like checking for spies. “You know.”

Emma chuckled. We might have to figure out how to refer to this thing while we’re out in public. Regina would undoubtedly accidentally provide them with a euphemism. “Right. She’ll be fine, though. I’ll be around to help, so you can lean on me, too. I mean, I am your mother, too.”

Henry nudged her with his shoulder. “Duh. I know that.”

“Good. So, if you need to talk about the situation or how you’re feeling, I’m here,” Emma said.

He nodded and smiled a little. “You’re going to go back and make sure she’s all right, right?”

“Of course I am. I promise you, Henry, neither of you is alone in this. I’m here for both of you. It’ll be all right.”

He took a deep breath before giving her a sidelong glance. “Do you think Robin Hood will be there?” His eyebrow arched.

Emma scratched her head and shrugged. “I’m not sure. I guess it’s on Regina. We’ll see what happens.”

“Do you think she wants him there?”

Emma doubted it, but she was not sure. Regina might suddenly find herself longing for her soul mate again, not that Emma could understand why. “Again, that’s up to your mom.”

Henry nodded again. “Do you want him to be there?”

No. Emma could not see what good Robin would add to the situation. “It doesn’t matter about what I want and regardless of his actions, I’ll be here.”

“Cool.”
They did not have a chance to talk much about things beyond that. They got to the bus stop and there were a couple of other kids there. Henry moved over to talk to his friends. Emma smiled a little and then faded in the background, knowing Henry was at the age where he was a little embarrassed by his parents, even though they were heroes.

Emma returned back to Regina’s house to find her on the couch with a wet rag over her face and her head thrown back. Emma sat down on the opposite edge. Regina groaned and Emma wondered if that little bit of movement might make Regina sick again.

“This is terrible. How did you survive this in prison?” Regina asked, her voice muffled by the cloth.

Emma snickered. “I didn’t have much of a choice. You’ll be all right.”

“I wasn’t as bothered with the morning sickness when I didn’t know it was morning sickness and now all of a sudden that knowledge seems to have added to how horrible this is. I hope the smells will be limited to butter.”

Emma held in a laugh, knowing things would not be that easy. “Oh, you might not be able to cook. That’s a tragedy for all involved.”

“You mean for you.”

“I like to think I am involved.”

Regina was silent for a long time and then let loose a long sigh. “There is one more involved.”

“Henry was wondering about him and, honestly, so am I. What are you going to do?”

Regina eased the cloth from her face and rubbed the bridge of her nose. “I’ve asked Kathleen to draw up some papers for me.”

Emma’s forehead wrinkled. “What kind of papers?”

Regina glanced at her, lines marring her eyes. “I’m going to have Robin relinquish his parental rights.”

Emma gasped and her eyes went wide. She never would have expected Regina to go to such lengths at that point. Regina had changed so much, yet this seemed to be the Regina of old, hoarding a child.

“Regina, you can’t be serious about keeping him from his kid. Is this a way to punish him for choosing his wife over you?” Emma asked.

Regina scowled and her eyes hardened. “Do you think so little of me, Miss Swan?”

Emma winced. *Shit, that wasn’t the right way to start this conversation with her.* “Regina—”

Venom remained locked in Regina’s eyes. “You will not tell me what to do with a child I do not share with you. This has nothing to do with who Robin chose. It has everything to do with me having some agency and say in this situation.”

Emma decided not to back down. Yeah, Robin was a douche from what she could tell, but Regina was not being fair. “By taking his agency and say away?”

Of course, Regina did not back down and looking at her, no one would have imagined just a minute ago she was groaning about morning sickness and throwing up everything that made her who she was. “What does this man have to offer me or this situation? His long, elaborate speeches on how
much honor he has that mean nothing to him or anyone listening? I have little desire to put up with him or his delusions of grandeur. Besides, do you honestly believe Robin will want anything to do with me or this situation?"

*I’m guessing “situation” will be Regina’s code word for this whole thing. “You’re his soul mate.”* Saying the words always made Emma’s teeth itch. The whole idea of destiny continued to bother her. She liked to think there was freewill and she had some control over her life.

Regina scoffed. “You sound like a young Henry. Have you brought into the fairy tale magic?”

Emma frowned. “Well, you act like we’re not surrounded by magic at every turn and screwed over by it. True Love is a thing, so why not soul mates?”

Regina gnashed her teeth in a very unladylike manner, but very much like a dangerous predator. “I have always felt that was weak from the beginning for more reasons than I can count, but he had been a chance for me. Soul mates exist just as much as True Love in the Enchanted Forest, but I never thought life would dare deliver me such a gift. I know better and I barely believe I have a soul anymore, but I put my own spin on this. He had been a chance for me to see that all of humanity was not out to ruin me, but all he did was prove my earlier theory correct. Fate will never allow me a moment of true happiness without tearing it from my grip and watching as it leaves me in utter ruin.”

“Damn, Regina.” Emma never thought Robin was *that* bad. Yeah, he seemed to be a bit of a jerk, playing both sides of the fence with Regina and Marian. She could only wonder what he did to restore Regina’s mistrust of humanity. *How badly did he fuck up?*

Regina regarded Emma intently and Emma struggled not to squirm in her seat. The spark in Regina’s eyes told her she failed. A smirk on Regina’s face let Emma know she reveled in Emma’s discomfort. It was like a cat toying a mouse.

“Do you know when this… matter was conceived?”

Emma scratched her. “Uh… no.” *What does that have to do with Robin being a jerk? I hope he didn’t ask her to make him a sandwich or something after.*

Regina’s smirk curled and her eyes burned with devilish delight. “After Marian was frozen. I was in my crypt, hunting for ways to save his wife, trying to stay away from him and who should show up? Not saying I was an innocent in the matter, but I was trying to do the right thing. I was trying to do the right thing and there he is, in his face, begging and pleading and pouring it on. His wife was practically dead not even ten feet from us and, yet, there he was with me, wanting to me, begging me.” She shook her head.

“Regina…” Emma was not sure what to say and did not have anything at the moment. Mentally, she sighed. *Okay, what the hell is wrong with them?* At least Regina was not playing the victim, but still.

“I was trying to be a good person, Emma. I was trying.” Regina growled and made a fist, her eyes bright, but a little wild. “He makes me a not good person, in a way I have never been before. Worse than that, he seems to think he’s a good person. He seems to think it’s honorable that he’s trying to get back with his wife, after his True Love’s Kiss didn’t work on her, after he slept with me with her body a stone’s throw away, and after he pursued me knowing I originally had Marian executed. Would you want this man around your child?”

That was a loaded question and Emma was not sure if she should answer it. After all, that man had been around her child. Of course, who was she to judge? She had Hook around Henry and it had only taken a few slow days for her to realize Hook was bad for her health. *Hopefully, he’ll take the
hint and stay the hell away, too. She did not want to deal with Hook, not when she had Regina on her plate already.

“You know, it’s your call, Regina. If you don’t want him around your kid, it’s your kid. What are you going to do if he doesn’t go for it, though?” Emma asked.

Regina gave her a look like she was utterly mad. “What other choice does he have?”

“Well, won’t he want to do the honorable thing? And, last I checked, by most worlds’ definition, the honorable thing here is taking care of his child.”

Regina scoffed and her eyes were stone again. “And how would he manage to do that? With his amazing job? His unbelievable house? With his great traits like reminding everyone how honorable he is while sleeping with the woman who essentially murdered his wife?” Her voice was a hiss now.

Emma winced. “Do you… do you want to talk about that?” It seemed killing Marian bothered Regina more than anyone probably thought it would. Hell, there had been rumors flying around town that Regina had purposely tried to replace Marian after executing her. Of course, that idea was insane considering the time in between, but no one was interested in that logic.

Regina’s shoulders dropped as she sighed. “Not really. Not yet. Well, not beyond the fact that, I don’t even remember. It’s not just that I don’t remember her, but I don’t remember so much. It’s like, thinking back in a fog or sometimes looking through someone else’s eyes. I can’t believe how far gone I was and how I never noticed. How had I gotten to that point?”

Emma leaned forward. “You know, I kinda wondered that, too, when I was in the Enchanted Forest and made the pleasure to meet the Queen you. It’s like, she’s you, but not you. I imagine everyone is like that with their younger self. I could see shades of you there. I mean, I remember what you tried to do to me when I first came, but it was just weird. It was beyond and you were even more over the top.”

“The anger. The hurt. The abandonment. I’m sure you know what it’s like to feel almost like you’re the last person Earth.”

Emma nodded and her insides bunched up together. Flinching, she shook her head to keep from going back to that place, that feeling. “It’s a horrible feeling.”

Regina took a deep breath and nodded. “And that’s what I felt all the time. Thousands of people around me and I felt like I was the only one there, like I was million miles away, and nothing could ever bring anyone back. I know it doesn’t justify my behavior. I’ve come to understand that. I’ve had time to calm down and reflect. I’ve come to understand and accept what I did. For the longest time, I felt like it was me against the world and damn the world for being wrong.”

“Having Henry changed that?”

Regina scoffed. “Please, did I not try to poison you for daring to tempt Henry with the idea of another family? No, I hate to think of what changed that.” A frown settled on her face and she was quiet for a moment.

Emma scowled. “Are you seriously not going to tell me?”

“I can’t tell you what I don’t know. Maybe I softened with age at first and then softened a little more with Henry and then you showed up…” Regina shook her head. “I don’t think I can pinpoint where I changed. Hell, if I changed. It all seems like the flow of a river. I was at one point and now I’m at another, but I’m still water. It’s better than the times when I didn’t seem to flow and was ice.”
Emma rubbed her forehead. That made sense to her, but did not make sense to her at the same time. She just took it as Regina evolving as a human being, as people tended to do as the world revolved, information changed, and life happened.

Regina shook her head. “Anyway, will you accompany me to Robin’s home I suppose when the documents come?”

“You think you’ll need law enforcement?” Emma could not imagine Robin trying to hurt Regina, but then again, tons of things she could not imagine were reality now. Yeah, but violence on a woman? This is freaking Robin Hood. Then, she thought a little more. Wait, Robin Hood wouldn’t treat Maid Marian the way he has either, so what the hell?

Regina eyed her and her mouth pulled into a half-smirk. “You really are your father’s child.”

Emma’s brow furrowed. “I know this is a way of calling me an idiot, but why?” I missed something here, but damned if I know what I missed.

Regina shook her head, but her small, amused expression remained. “For all you know I could mean you’re charming.”

“I know you think my dad is a charming idiot.”

Regina reached over and patted her hand. “Well, he is. That doesn’t answer the question, though. Will you come? Not as the sheriff, but as Emma.”

Emma blinked and opened her mouth to reply, but discovered she was at a lost for words. Regina wanted her there just to have someone by her side? She wanted someone to stand with her and she chose Emma. Okay, wow. I don’t even know what to do with that information.

Before the words came to her, Emma nodded. “I’ll be there. Just text me when you need me, okay?”

“Of course,” Regina answered. She glanced at the clock on the wall. “Now, I believe both of us should be at work.”

“Shit!” Emma leaped up off of the couch. “I didn’t even call in to say I’d be late!” David would have so many jokes about that once she told him where she was, especially since she practically ran out of the apartment while he was still just waking up.

Regina shook her head. “Your sense of responsibility is truly astounding.”

Emma ignored the sarcasm and shot her father a text while Regina went to grab her things. They left the house at the same time, but in different cars. It probably would’ve been a better idea to just take the one car. Emma was not sure why she thought that. Regina probably wouldn’t have gone for that.

“Mayor keeping you busy?” David grinned the moment Emma walked into the station door.

“You keep that up and I’ll make up a story about me and the mayor to ruin your psyche,” Emma replied with a grin of her own.

David gasped, putting his hands over his mouth and his eyes went wide. “You wouldn’t. Regina would destroy you as soon as the rumor got back to her.”

Emma narrowed her gaze on him. “You would actually tell people stuff like that?”

Squaring his shoulders, David smirked at her. “I do believe it’s called tit for tat. If you want to mess
up my brain, then I have to hit you back in any way I can.”

“By getting me murdered. Nice, Dad. Nice.” She fell into the chair at the empty desk.

He smiled at her. “Any reason you ran out the house like your tail was on fire to go over to her place, though?”

“She hasn’t been feeling well and she doesn’t seem to think Henry is old enough to ready for school on his own. He proved her wrong.”

“She’s sick?”

Emma shrugged and tried to think of way to put her response, so she was not technically lying. “She just didn’t feel good, but she went to work, so I guess she’s okay.”

David seemed satisfied with that. The rest of the day went pretty normal. While Emma did not have to get Henry, Regina invited her over for dinner. She assumed, along with her parents, it was a thank you for the morning rescue, though Regina never said. Emma did not say anything, not wanting to jinx it, not when the meal was so good and she got to spend time with their son. Time well spent.

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Emma was not sure why she was surprised Robin Hood lived in a little cabin in the woods. Maybe it was because the Merry Men had a campsite around it. It rubbed her the wrong way a little, like a king in his castle or something. Robin had a house, all be it a small one, while his followers had tents in the cold, frosty weather. There seemed to be some construction going on around the area, so it was possibly the Merry Men were building cabins of their own, creating their own little community. Emma knew the cabin Robin lived in was not handmade, though. Unless a flick of Regina’s wrist countered.

“Well, I couldn’t very well allow Roland to live in squalor, could I?” Regina asked as Emma looked the cabin up and down from outside.

“I guess not,” Emma mumbled. “Although, I could see him being a little Tarzan out here.” Roland had the hair for it.

“I’d rather not see the boy raised by apes, although I suppose this is close enough to that.”

“Ouch. No love for the Merry Men?” Emma had met quite a few of them and they all seemed like regular guys. Yeah, Will Scarlet was annoying, but Alan-a-Dale was quite gifted at storytelling and more than a little fun with enough beer in him.

Regina glanced at Emma and sniffed, but did not bother to comment. She knocked with a delicate hand covered in a leather glove. Emma figured that was the end of the conversation.

“One moment,” a female voice called. A few seconds later, Marian opened the door, dressed plainly with a simple ponytail in her hair. Her eyes had lines under them and her expression, already muted, dropped when she saw Regina. “Your Majesty.” Her tone was clipped and her breath hung in the chilly air, which managed to make her tone seemed frostier.

Regina did not even bat an eye to what was supposed to be an insult. Despite the fact that Regina had saved Marian’s life on more than one occasion and rightfully stepped aside when Robin decided to try again with his wife, Marian watched Regina with quite a bit of suspicion whenever she tolerated being around Regina anyway. Emma was not sure if Marian expected Regina to flip out and kill everyone, which she would not be alone in, or if she expected Regina to try and steal Robin.
Maybe Marian would never be able to see Regina as anything beyond the other woman.

“I need to speak with you and Robin about a sensitive matter,” Regina stated.

Marian glanced into the house and then opened the door wider. Regina stepped in with Emma right behind her. Emma smiled at Marian, who smiled back. They came directly into the living room, which was quaint and tastefully decorated. Two small couches with throw pillows, a rug, and small coffee table with a few pictures. It said home, but did not feel quite right. There was something in the air. Emma could not put her finger on it, but she thought it would remind her of Snow’s apartment. For some reason, it did not. There was not the same warmth and the air felt thick, pressing.

“How’s it going?” Emma asked Marian, who did not get a chance to answer.

“Who was that at the door?” Robin’s voice carried from another room as light, fast footsteps approached.

“Regina!” Roland beamed as he dashed over, throwing himself in Regina’s arms. Regina hugged him tight, pressing him to her chest and lifting him off the ground. Emma was about to stop Regina, but held the protest in. Surely lifting something heavy so early in her pregnancy could not hurt Regina or the baby.

Marian tensed as she shut the door, but she did not say anything. She just watched Regina hold her child. Roland beamed in Regina’s arms, hugging her as tight as her coat would allow. Regina mussed his usually wild hair. It had been tamed, so maybe he would not be the best baby Tarzan now.

“How have you been?” Regina asked with a bright smile.

“I got new stuff for my room!” Roland reported. Emma could only wonder how he got new stuff since neither of his parents worked. “You wanna come and see?”

Regina continued to smile. “I would love to, but first I have to speak with your father and Momma, okay?”

“Okay!” His cheeks were so chubby, pushed up in his grin, and he looked like a little cherub.

“Regina? Regina, what are you doing here?” Robin demanded as he stepped into view. He glared at Regina, as if she had done something wrong.

Regina turned to him. “I have to speak with you and Marian about something.” Her voice was calm, but her eyes hardened, like she was prepared for battle.

“And you’ve brought the sheriff.” Robin’s scowl deepened. Emma understood. Law enforcement left a bad taste in his mouth. It was the same for her and took her a long time to adjust to wearing a star. She just hoped eventually he would understand she was one of the good guys.

Emma put her hands up in surrender. “I’m here in a friend/support role. I’m not even on the clock right now.” Hell of a way to spend a Saturday.

“To support who?” Marian inquired, eyes narrowed on Emma.

“Perhaps we can all sit down and discuss this like mature adults?” Regina requested, tone still civil as she eased Roland safely back to the floor. He whined as soon as his feet hit the ground.

“Roland, will you please go to your room for a few minutes while we speak with the mayor and the
sheriff?” Marian asked.

Roland pouted. “Aw! I wanna stay with Regina.”

“Maybe later. Right now, you should go to your room,” Robin ordered. Roland pouted a little more, but when it was clear it was not going to work, he took off deeper into the house. Robin turned his attention back to Regina. “So, what do you want to talk about?”

“Are you here to throw us out of our home?” Marian said, glaring at Regina. Internally, Emma winced for Regina.

“I don’t see why I would be here for that. I’ll make this brief.” Regina went into her briefcase and pulled out several papers and a pen. “I need Robin to sign these parents relinquishing parental rights.”

“Parental rights of whom?” Robin inquired with an arched eyebrow. “I won’t let you have Roland. He might be partial to you because you spoiled him in the Enchanted Forest, but you are nothing to him.”

*Ouch.* Emma could not believe Robin said that to Regina’s face. Was it just for show since Marian did not like Regina or did Robin truly believe Regina would try to steal his son? And did he truly think Regina was nothing to the boy who looked beyond happy when he saw her?

Regina frowned. “This has nothing to do with Roland. I am… with child.” She said the phrase like someone had a gun to her back.

“How do you even know it’s my child?” Robin demanded, spit clinging to his lip. Emma bit back a wince. Wow, he was a dick.

“I know it’s your child because I’m eight weeks along and I haven’t been with anyone else in about two years. So, yes, this one is on you. I understand it’s a lot to take in, but you can simply sign these papers and no one will have to know,” Regina said. Her voice was steady, like it was business meeting. She gentle pushed the papers toward Robin.

“I would know!” Robin huffed, pounding his chest.

“We would know.” Marian pointed between the pair of them.

“Yes, we would, but you two are trying to repair your marriage. Is this something you want getting in the way of that?” Regina asked bluntly.

Wow, Regina came out swinging, which let Emma know how important this was for Regina. Sometimes, for Robin, Regina had a soft spot. Or a blind spot. One of the two. Not anymore, though. Regina’s main concern was for her child. *Always a mama bear.* It made Emma want to hold her chin up, but she did not want to make the situation any more tense than it was.

“You’re lying,” Marian stated, folding her arms across her chest. She shifted from one foot to the other. Emma

“I am very much not lying. In fact, I wish I was lying, but the universe had other plans, as it unfortunately does. Now, if you would just sign these, Robin, before I go into further details about this incident,” Regina said. Ah, a new Regina-ism for the pregnancy.
“Further details?” Robin echoed and then his eyes went wide.

Emma could only imagine the “oh, shit!” meter in his head skyrocketing. If Regina told Marian when and where the baby was conceived, there probably would be no saving their marriage. Not that she understood why Robin would want to save it considering his actions when Marian was damn near dead in a block of ice. Apparently, getting laid was more of a priority than assisting the person trying to save Marian’s life to him. Yeah, a total dick.

“Marian, perhaps it would be best for me to sign the papers,” Robin said.

Marian scowled and ground her teeth to the point her jaw visibly shifted. It was a damned if he did, damned if he did not situation for Marian. No matter what Marian had to walk around with the knowledge that her husband, her great love, slept with and had a baby by the woman responsible for her death/disappearance. Emma could only wonder what went through her mind.

“Why should you entrust your child to the Evil Queen?” Marian hissed.

“Perhaps because he knows the legal system of this world a little better than you do. First off, should he fail to sign these papers, I will then see him in court. The court will make note that I am mayor of this town,” Regina pointed out.

“And the Evil Queen,” Marian insisted.

“No, here I am Mayor Regina Mills. I have already raised a rather well adjusted son. I have a well paying job. Not to mention, I have saved this wretched town a record four times for certain doom or disaster. What is your husband’s claim to fame in this time and era? Oh, he knows how to shoot a bow at an innocent bystanders. Bravo.” Regina’s eyes burned, seething, like she wanted to set the house on fire. Thankfully, she had some restraint.

“It was four? Wasn’t Zelena only trying to kill you, though?” Emma pointed out.

“And your brother,” Regina countered. “And she stole your father’s courage. Could you imagine him living the rest of his life as a coward?”

Emma held up her hands. “I absolutely cannot imagine that. Four times. Fine.”

“Thank you,” Regina deadpanned. “Now, might I be allowed to continue or should I also mention the times I saved your miserable life?”

Emma scoffed. “I think I’m ahead of you in that column.”

Regina sneered and turned her attention back to Robin and Marian. “Beyond the delusion that somehow Robin would win a court case against me, who here really wants to raise the Evil Queen’s baby beyond me?”

The couple actually winced. It was not overt, but the reaction was enough to be noticeable. Emma resisted the urge to punch Robin in the face. How dare he act disgusted by the idea of having a baby with Regina? What did he expect when he fucked her in the vault? No, no, no. I do not want to think about that.

“Regina, perhaps some… laserwort—” Robin barely got the word out before Regina snarled at him. She made a fist and, for a moment, Emma thought Regina “force” choked Robin. But, nope, her expression was enough to steal his words right out his throat, but he was still breathing.

“How dare you!” Regina snarled. It was by some miracle or mercy Regina had not set fire to Robin
Emma could only wonder what the hell “laserwort” was, but it was probably really bad considering how murderous Regina looked. Marian flinched, stepped back and then moved forward a little, like she was unsure if she should flee or fight.

“Regina,” Emma said, putting her hand on Regina’s elbow.

Regina took a deep breath. “Now, one set of papers is to terminate Robin’s parental rights and the other is a nondisclosure agreement for all of us. No one here will ever need to speak of this child’s lineage beyond the obvious.” She clicked her pen.

“And if we refuse?” Marian said. Emma admired her courage.

“Again, there are details. I could go into them if you would like,” Regina replied.

“It’s fine,” Robin growled, putting out his hand for the pen. Regina obliged him.

And just like that, Regina was carrying a legally fatherless baby and none of them would ever mention Robin Hood was the father again. Regina seemed to be in quite the rush to leave once everything was signed. Emma just followed her.

“Did you just try to save their marriage?” Emma asked.

Regina scoffed. “Do you honestly think I care about their marriage? I only care about this situation.”

Emma decided to let Regina have her tough talk. She knew Regina had a soft, gooey center at this point in their interactions. Now, she wondered when the soft, gooey center got there and how much it might grow. She glanced at Regina’s stomach. Yeah, how much will it grow?

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Next time: Emma and Regina spend some time together.

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Chapter End Notes

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5: Team Work

After spending her Saturday morning with Regina and Robin and also signing a confidentiality contract to never speak of the father of Regina’s child, Emma went home. It was late. Regina had invited her for dinner and she accepted, sticking around to play video games with Henry and talk about “the situation,” but eventually she had to go home. The sounds of Lil Bit, also known as Neal, crying hit her ears before she even opened the door.

“Emma, you’re back? You were gone for the whole day,” Snow said.

“Yeah, I know,” Emma replied. Not counting the madness with Robin Hood, it actually was a good day.

“You didn’t get on Regina’s nerves?” David inquired with a smirk.

“She fed me, so I assume not.”

David arched an eyebrow. “You okay?”

Emma nodded. “Yeah, just a little tired from kicking Henry’s butt in video games. I’m gonna crash.”

Well, as best she could with a weeping baby in the apartment.

Emma fell into bed, sighing into her pillow. *I still can’t believe he signed that contract.* Why? Emma could not imagine signing away her own kid to save anything beyond the kid anyway. She gave Henry up for his best chance, but Robin had not even thought of that. He gave up to save face.

“Would Dad do that?” Emma wondered and then groaned. David had given her up several times in life. The first time she had come to understand, especially since he was essentially dead after putting her in the wardrobe. The second time, to be fair, he was dying in Neverland. The third time, he did not have much of a choice with the Curse being reversed and all and she felt like David was fairly honorable.

Emma shook her head. David would never just sign a paper saying he was not her father. She knew that. *Well, no, would he do it to save his marriage?* She suspected her mother might. *No, Mom wouldn’t do it with a baby. Just a full grown adult kid.* She shook that away. They had a long discussion about that stuff and she felt like they had come to a good understanding of each other’s feelings. She did not want to rehash things they had worked out to a degree anyway.

“I’m not a replaceable. They thought they were honoring a hero when they named Neal after Neal, but he will forever be Lil Bit. Maybe mini-Charming when he gets older. Dad doesn’t want to rush back to the Enchanted Forest with or without me. And Mom… Well, she means well.” Emma learned that Snow just had a knack for trying to help and messing things up. A talent maybe. It was annoying, but it was not really malicious.
But, none of that helped to figure out why Robin had so easily given up his child. Regina crossed Robin out of the picture fairly quickly as well. It was weird, to Emma anyway. Why is this bothering me so much? Because it seemed wrong. She hoped it would work itself out over the weekend.

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Emma rubbed her eyes as she tried to focus on the paperwork in front of her, but all she could think about was Robin Hood signing away his parental rights to try to save his marriage. Was that the right thing to do? Two days later and she still felt like it was not. She felt like Robin knew that, but there had been such pressure. Of course, that led her to thinking if Regina had done the right thing. She had backed the play, so had Emma herself done the right thing?

Regina thought she was protecting her baby and maybe she was. Robin Hood certainly seemed like a douche from the little bit of interaction Emma had with him and from what she had seen with him with Regina, but did that mean he was a horrible father? She had seen plenty of horrible fathers in her life and she was not sure where he would fall.

Regina would know much better than Emma how Robin was as a father. Was there something wrong with the way he treated Roland? Maybe she could ask Regina, but she could already imagine the hatred in Regina’s gaze. It made her squirm in her seat. I could always ask Mulan. She’s one of the Merry Men. Maybe she knows something. Of course, Mulan was not likely to tell tales out of school.

The sound of Henry’s voice pulled her out of her thoughts. “Emma.”

Emma blinked and focused on Henry as he marched over to her desk. “What’s up, kid? Shouldn’t you be in school?”

“It’s a half day today. Parent teacher conferences, remember? Well, no, you clearly don’t.” He shook his head. “It doesn’t matter. Can you buy me an ereader?”

Emma forehead wrinkled as her eyebrows bunched together. “Why do you need an ereader? You could just download the kindle app on your phone and use my amazon account or your mom’s.”

Henry made a face like he tasted something bad. “Have you ever tried to read a book on your phone, Emma? Your eyes hurt and you get easily distracted by all the texts and other junk. Come on, an ereader isn’t even that expensive. I think the cheapest Kindle Fire is, like, sixty bucks and that’s a whole tablet.”

Emma blinked again. “Oh, so you’ve researched this and it’s not that expensive.”

“It’s not.”

She offered him a smirk and a shrug. “So, go get a part time job and buy one yourself. It sounds pretty easy to me.” My spoiled little kid. She even loved that about him.

Henry frowned and folded his arms across his chest. “You know I didn’t mean it that way, Emma. Look, I want to learn more about what to expect while Mom’s… holding her apple, but I don’t want her to know because she’ll think I’m worrying for nothing and she’ll tell me not to and all that junk. I can’t go to the library or everyone will know either you or Mom is… carrying around apples and that’s just going to start a whole mess.”

Mess isn’t even close. Emma dodged a bullet with the dwarves, who had not talked about her buying those pregnancy tests. But, then again, she was almost certain her father went and set them straight.
“Eh. Maybe they’d assume it was your grandmother again,” Emma said and then she looked up to check if her father was still around. Thankfully, David was gone. The last thing they needed was for people to know Regina was pregnant before Regina was ready to tell anyone. *She’d burn the whole place down.*

Henry scoffed. “Even if that was the case, she’d get suspicious when everyone started congratulating and then she’ll say something to Mom. You know that, right?”

“Regina would then pull my lungs out of my chest, even if she and my mom get along now.” Emma shook the mental image away and then squinted at Henry. “Why are you trying to read up on… apples, though? You don’t need to worry about that.” *Why’d we agree to call this thing an apple? It sounds so weird.*

He groaned and hit his forehead with his palm. “If I wanted that answer, I’d have gone to Mom with this. I want to be able to help her through this and to do that I need more than the bare necessities.”

Emma gave him a deadpan expression. “Really? The Disney references are my thing now. You can’t just take that from me.”

Henry smirked. “I just did. Anyway, I want Mom to really get that I’m not mad with her.”

Emma smiled a little. “You know I’m going to be there, too, right?”

He beamed and stood up a little taller, like he was proud of her. “I know, which is awesome, but every little bit helps, right?”

Emma nodded. “That’s true. Besides, if your mom is as stubborn about this as she is about everything else, it’ll take at least the two of us to get her to do the right thing if she decides to do something against the doctor’s orders. Speaking of doctor’s, I should call her to see if she’s scheduled a real doctor’s appointment yet.”

Henry’s brow furrowed. “Didn’t you go to the doctor to find out she was…” Henry frowned as their code word did not really fit in that sentence. “This is harder than I thought. But, yeah, didn’t you go to the doctor to confirm everything?”

“Of course, but now she needs to go in for real checkups and things like that. Even when we went out for apples, she just had blood drawn. She ran out of the place like her ass was on fire.” Emma winced as soon as she finished that sentence. “Pretend I didn’t say that.” *I’ve got to work on talking to him like he’s a cohort.* She, sometimes, got too invested in Henry’s schemes.

He smirked at her with an evil glint in his eyes. “I will if you buy me the ereader.”

Emma shook her head. “Kid, I pray you grow out of that trait.”

Henry laughed, like he knew he came by the bribery habit honestly. He probably got it from all of his parents. “Seriously, though, Emma. I want to be able to help, so I want to know what’s going on.”

“I’ve got the heavy lifting here, Henry. If I need your help, I’ll ask and I’ll talk to your mom for her to understand that if she needs your help, she should ask. I don’t know how much I want my fourteen year old son learning about his mom’s apples, though.” Emma winced. That sounded dirty. “I don’t know how much your mom would want that either.” She was not in the mood to save Henry from himself, so she hoped he took her seriously here. He had enough trauma in his life, after all.

Henry scratched his chin in thought. “Probably not very much now that I think about it. She’d have a
lot of questions about how I knew things and I’m not sure how I’d explain it.”

“And I’d get in trouble for it.” Emma was waiting for the cliché moment where Henry would be “her son” when he did something bad or off the wall.

“Okay, well, are you going to buy some pregnancy books and learn about what to expect when expecting?” Henry gazed on her with stern eyes.

Emma gave him a flat look. “Where did you hear that phrase?”

“In Grams’ mommy and me class.”

Sighing, Emma pinched the bridge of her nose. “I really need to monitor where your grandparents take you from now on. I’m fine with reading on my phone. I have the apps for it and everything.”

“Oh, we should see about pregnancy apps for Mom. We can download them onto her phone.” So, he was abandoning the code word altogether, which was fine by her.

She gave Henry a little frown. “Or we could talk to her about them and she can download them into her phone.” *I feel like it might be a cold day in Hell when that happens, but we can try.*

Henry sighed. “You used to be a lot more fun.” He gave her a cheeky grin.

“Are you ever going to grow out of this ‘everything has to be a secret operation’ phase?”

Henry shrugged. “Secret operations are cool.”

“What secret operations?” David asked as he wandered back in with coffee in his hand, going straight to his desk.

Emma waved him off. “Nothing. Henry just always wants something to be a secret operation, even the most mundane things.”

“That’s the hero in him.” A proud smile lit up David’s face. “Emma, Snow wanted me to remind you about parent teacher conferences. She knows you’ve been really busy and she was worried you might have forgotten. No reason to give Regina a chance to be mad at you, right?”

“Henry just reminded me.” Emma’s phone buzzed and she checked it. “And Regina just texted me. Apparently, I’m ordered to be ready to go at lunch time. I don’t recall surrendering my lunch for this.” Emma texted back, wondering why they could not just go to the evening one.

“You’re actually going to argue with her over this?” Henry asked, almost like he was scolding her.

“It’s okay. I’m not arguing. I just wanted go to the evening one,” she explained and then she got a return text. Apparently, Regina made a doctor’s appointment and they had to go to that after work. “Okay, so my wishes don’t matter.” She slapped her thighs and then threw her hands up.

David laughed. “You suspected otherwise?”

“Of course not. It never hurts to try, though.” Emma looked at Henry. “You’re going to hang out with your grandfather or did your mom make arrangements she failed to tell me about?”

“She expects me to hang out with Gramps.” He pointed to his grandfather with his thumb.

Emma nodded. That was usually what they did now when she or Regina was unavailable to be with Henry. She would see what Regina thought about giving the kid a little more freedom, though. He
was a teenager now. He should have a chance to look after himself.

“Well, let me go grab a donut since my lunch is being interrupted,” Emma said.

“Don’t let her see you eating that donut,” David replied.

Emma laughed, even though it was very likely that Regina would reprimand her over the donut if she was caught with it. Still, she needed something in her stomach. Yes, she had a good breakfast five hours ago thanks to Regina, but she had a pretty healthy metabolism. She called Regina on her way over to the diner.

“I’m about to grab a quick bite. Do you want anything? Have you started having weird cravings yet?” Emma asked.

“No, and you might want to hold off on getting anything. You do recall what the smell of syrup did to me this morning,” Regina replied.

Emma winced. Syrup had replaced butter on the “smells Regina could not stomach” list. It was a short list, so far, and they all hoped it would stay that way. “Maybe that was just syrup. It doesn’t have to be all sugary, gooey substances, right?” She really wanted a donut.

“I have lunch for you. We can do the conference and then eat in my office.”

“Oh, that sounds reasonable.” *If lunch is as good as breakfast and dinner, I’m all for it.* “So, how are you feeling?” She turned around, heading back to the station.

Regina groaned. “I just had a meeting with a man whose cologne made me want to strangle him with his off color tie.”

Emma whimpered in sympathy for Regina. *Guess the smell list is growing. Good thing Henry’s too young for cologne and aftershave.* “Well, hopefully you don’t have to see him again.”

“I dislike the idea that any random smell might send me into fits.” Fits. Emma wondered how long that Regina-ism would stand in for “vomiting mess.”

“It sucks, but at the end of this torture, there’s good things, right?” Emma asked as she reentered the station. It was time to end the conversation and part of her wished that was not the case. She wanted to talk about the baby and Regina’s plans.

Regina was surprisingly silent, like she had to think on the answer. When the expected, “Yes” finally came, Emma barely heard it and it seemed to be said through a gulp. Emma’s gut clinched just a little. *What is up with Regina?*

Emma hoped she and Regina could eventually have a serious talk about everything soon. “I’ll talk to you later. I’ve got work to finish before you come to pick me up.”

“Until then.”

They disconnected the call just as David and Henry looked at her. She shrugged. “Regina said she made me lunch.”

“Of course she did,” David remarked and Henry snickered.

Emma narrowed her gaze on them. “Were you two talking about me?”

“Not at all. I was just telling Henry how weird you and Regina are,” David replied.
“We’re weird?” Emma arched an eyebrow as she flopped down into her seat.

“Yes, you’re weird. I mean, I appreciate the fact that you share a son and all, but there are times when you act like a married couple.”

Emma glared at her father. “It’s acting like a ‘married couple’ to go to our son’s parent teacher conference? I’m sure parents who aren’t together do that all the time.”

“I don’t doubt that, but how often do they bring each other lunch?”

Emma hissed at him. “Shut up.”

The two laughed at her and she just ignored them. Regina was right on time and they were off to the parent teacher conference. They had not really had a chance to do school functions thanks to all of the weirdness in Storybrooke. The few things they had been able to do in the six weeks of peace had not been much.

“Thanks for doing this with me,” Emma said. The only parent teacher conferences she had attended were in the faded false memories Regina gifted her. She could more feel them than remember them now. There were two in New York, but she had worked those nights and Henry’s report card did not seem to warrant her needing to go in.

Regina glanced at her. “I do believe we agreed we would coparent and he was our son.”

Emma smiled. “This is true. Should we have brought him? I vaguely recall him coming with me.”

“I used to bring him with me because it was only us. It was something to do together and there wasn’t really anyone to watch him. But, now, he has people to be with and I have you to go with.”

Emma sat up a little taller, feeling pride zip up her spine. “Speaking of that, do you think we should let Henry watch himself sometimes? I mean, it’s nice he wants to be with his grandparents, but he’s thirteen and he’ll be in high school next year.” He seemed like he could use a little independence and trust.

Regina nodded. “You think we should let him spread his wings a little?” She kept her eyes on the road, but a little sadness sneaked in. Emma could feel her pain. Our little boy is growing up.

“He’s a good kid. Plus, he used to spend a couple of hours at home by himself in New York.”

Regina gasped and glanced at her. “Emma, you allowed our son to be a latch key kid?”

Emma put her hands up. “I didn’t let him. I trusted him to be on his own for a little while. We should trust him.”

“Was he… was he all right?”

“He was fine. I kept some snacks in the apartment for him, so he didn’t have to try to cook. He microwaved stuff when he was really hungry. He could be trusted to do his homework without me breathing down his next. He was fine. So, I just think we should trust him now and see what happens.” There were times in New York where Emma would actually think, “whose kid is this?” because some of the things he did, she knew he could not have gotten from her.

Regina sighed. “I suppose we could try. He never said anything about it bothering him.”

“I doubt it does. He’ll probably go hang out with David or Snow whenever he has free time anyway,
but let him decide. Maybe he has friends now he’d like to hang out with. I just think it’s about time to let him get comfortable deciding on what to do with his time.”

“Is this because of the… situation?”

“No, nothing to do with the kidlet and everything to do with Henry’s growing up and we have to let him.”

Regina sighed again, her shoulders slumping. “He is. I don’t want to let go, though.”

“You never have to let go, Regina. You do have to let him fly off and come back on his own, though. No matter what you’ll always be his mom, whether he’s five or fifty.”

Regina glanced at her, but did not offer up a counter. In fact, a small smile played on Regina’s lips for the rest of the trip. They were at the school before the conversation could get any deeper. Now, it was time to hear the glowing reports on Henry like always.

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“I wish you would’ve let me just punch that guy,” Emma huffed as she threw herself into the passenger seat of Regina’s car. Screw parent teacher conferences!

“You can’t just punch Henry’s English teacher, even if he is a pompous ass,” Regina replied as she slid into the driver’s seat.

“How dare he?” Emma roared.

“So I’m not the darling of the school community. It happens. I’m not the darling of the community at large.”

“Yeah, but for him to say Henry’s grades could possibly be based on the fact that people are terrified of you is ridiculous! In New York, he kicked ass academically, more so than he was doing here. This kid would not touch anything under a ninety with a ten foot pole and he wants me to believe Henry has a C in his class? Get the hell out of here! Henry has fucking magical writing powers, but somehow can’t muster a good essay in this class?”

“Emma, we made an appointment and we will see the principal about it tomorrow. For now, I will get you back to work. Are you coming with me to the doctor later?”

Emma sobered. “Yeah, why wouldn’t I?”

“I didn’t want to assume anything.”

“Regina, I will be at every damn doctor’s appointment from now on. Just tell me when they are.”

“Of course.”

“Do you think Robin would have done this?” Emma blurted out. *If he wouldn’t have done this, would he even deserve this kid?*

Regina frowned. “I do not think he would have. I doubt he was as torn over this incident as he acted either. I can no longer believe his ‘I’m honorable’ bullshit.”

Emma winced at the swear word. “Wow.” *Robin must be much more of an asshole than I was giving him credit for.*
“Emma, I know you didn’t understand the little point in our exchange where Robin suggested I have some laserwort.”

“Yeah, no idea what it is.”

“It’s part of a medicine given in the Enchanted Forest to terminate pregnancies.”

Emma’s mouth dropped open. Okay, wow was an understatement. Asshole also an understatement. She did not have anything against the decision or women who made the decision, but she believed it was a woman’s decision. Robin had no right to suggest such a thing. He should have asked Regina what she wanted to do, but he was too much of a jerk to do that. Emma rubbed her mouth with one hand as she tried to think of what to say to Regina.

“Can I punch him in the face?” Emma inquired. Of course, she might do that with or without permission the next time she saw him.

Regina waved the request off. “No, that’s unnecessary. I suspected he would make the suggestion the second he found out. It doesn’t matter. I will see this through to the end and I will never have to think of him. He can enjoy entertaining this idea that he might save his marriage.”

“You don’t think he will?”

“He pursued the woman who was responsible for his child growing up without a mother. I’m sure by the time that hits Marian, she will flee as quickly as she can. She will also come to realize when this whole situation began and I doubt he can talk his way around that,” Regina replied.

“You’ve thought about this a lot, huh?”

Sighing, Regina frowned and was silent for a long moment. “There are times when all I can do is wonder how many. And I wonder how I became that… creature… and then I remember how and it just makes everything worse.”

Emma reached over and took Regina’s hand. They were now in the parking lot of Town Hall. Emma was in no rush to go back to work, in no rush to leave Regina’s side, but they would have to get out to eat lunch eventually. Regina especially.

“He’s an asshole,” Emma stated.

“I can see that now. It doesn’t matter anyway. I barely know the man and I’ve realized that since his wife came back. What I do know, I don’t like as I take time to think about it.”

Regina unstrapped her seatbelt, ready to leave. Emma followed her lead and they walked to Regina’s office, ignoring any looks from people. It was not the first time they would have lunch together, but people seemed to think it was weird whenever they saw it. Emma flopped down in the seat by Regina’s desk, earning a reproachful glance, but nothing more. Regina went into her mini-fridge and eased a container in front of Emma.

“You know, I was going to suggest you buy me lunch every now and then for when I saved you from the Darkness, but I think I’d rather you make it,” Emma said as she popped the top of the container. Shredded chicken, yellow rice, and black beans awaited her. She inhaled and sighed.

“You might want to warm it up,” Regina said, motioning to the microwave on the back wall.

“That’s not an answer to making me lunch.”
“You didn’t ask a question.”

“Now you’re just being mean.”

Regina rolled her eyes. “I’ll consider it. Now, warm up your food, dear. You don’t want it to go to waste.”

Emma nodded, even though she was tempted to just jump right into the food. Rushing to heat up her meal, she eased back in her seat when it was done to see Regina started in on a salad. It was good none of the smells bothered Regina. With luck, she would be able to keep the meal down. They sat in silence for a little while before Emma let her mouth run away with her.

“How were you with him?” Emma was dying to know, especially after the way Regina spoke about Robin in the car.

Regina looked at her and scoffed. “Why were you with Hook?”

Emma groaned. “Do you really want to know?”

“No, not really, as I imagine the reasons were just as sad as my reasons for being with Robin. At least you came to your senses before you were in this state.”

Emma reached over and squeezed Regina’s hand. “Do you regret the baby?”

Regina sighed and shook her head. “I could never regret such a thing, despite the incident. I wish this happened in some other manner, someway that did not connect back to Robin. I would have preferred divine inference with almost anyone else.”

Emma laughed. “That’s what you think this was? Divine inference?” That might be her favorite Regina-ism.

“I can’t fathom how else this happened. Not that it matters. It happened. I will get over it eventually. I would never want a child to feel like his mother regretted him.”

Emma winced. “You think?” Her eyes drifted to the floor. She was tempted to count the fibers on the rug, needing something to keep her from meeting Regina’s eyes and possibly having her worst fear confirmed.

“Of course Henry doesn’t think you regret him, Miss Swan.” The “Miss Swan” was said in that “you’re an idiot, Emma” tone Regina was so fond of.

Emma laughed. “Of course he doesn’t and I don’t.”

“Yes, so pull yourself together. I have to get that through to this one. No, I shouldn’t have been with his father, but it’s done and I do have a blessing to show for it.”

Emma smiled. She said blessing. That’s good. “That’s exactly how I feel about Henry.”

Regina nodded. “I can imagine. Now, should I pick you up for the appointment or do you want to meet me there? We would have to return for your car.”

“What if I drove to your house and we went from there?”

“Sounds good. Perhaps we could test leaving Henry on his own for that moment to see how it works.”
Emma nodded. “He’ll probably like that.”

“It might be more for me than him,” Regina admitted.

“You’ll be okay.” Emma meant that beyond leaving Henry on his own. Regina seemed to know, giving her a nod and a smile. The smile did not quite reach her eyes, though. In fact, her eyes looked haunted. Emma was not sure what to say, but she wished she could change things somehow and make Regina happy about the situation.

After lunch, Emma and Regina parted ways only to reconnect later that day. Henry opened the door to the house to let Emma in while Regina was in the kitchen. Regina met them halfway through the house into the living room.

“All right, Henry. Make sure you turn off the oven in thirty minutes,” Regina said.

Henry groaned. “You’ve told me over a dozen times, Mom. I got it. You’re only to be gone for about an hour. That’s barely enough time to burn the house down.”

Emma palmed her face. “That is not the right thing to say in this situation, kid.”

Henry sighed and put on a “serious” face. “Mom, it’ll be fine. I put the reminder on my phone and we all know you’re going to text me to remind me to turn it off. I’m going to just sit on the couch and play video games until you come back. Hey, I might even text you to find out how the appointment is going.”

Regina breathed a sigh of relief. “Fine. When I come back, though, the game goes off and you have to do some reading.”

“I will.”

Henry practically shooed them out of the house. Emma did her best to hold in a laugh, but if Regina’s glare meant anything then she knew what Emma was holding back. Emma read several magazines while Regina had her appointment. There was a lot of information that Emma did not remember from her own pregnancy. She would definitely have to read more to be ready for whatever Regina was going through. *I might not have the same amount of time on my hands as before.* Of course, that already held true.

Before she could think more on the subject, Regina was making her next appointment. *Is this as much a whirlwind for Regina as it is for me?* Emma scoffed, knowing the answer to that one.

“I was ordered to give you the list of things I should do for this pregnancy and let you know I have prenatal vitamins to be picked up. Apparently, I am not trusted to do what is expected of me,” Regina said.

Emma laughed. “Wow, your doctor knows you well.”

“Yes, she was my physician as queen.”

“Then she knows you very well.”

“She also requests that you sit in after the exams if you’re going to there for them all.”

Emma blinked and then gawked for a long moment. “You told her?”

“She wanted to know if I had any support for this pregnancy. I told her I had you and Henry.”
Emma smiled. “Good, because you do.”

“Yes, well, once I said as much and informed her you were out here waiting, she suggested that you come in for the consultation after the exams.”

Emma nodded. “I can do that.” Well, now she would be sitting in on the appointments, too. That was fine. It would allow her to learn more of what she needed to do for Regina.

“Now, hopefully, Henry did not burn dinner and we can all have a decide meal at home.” Regina motioned for Emma to leave. Emma’s stomach turned, but she was halfway certain it did not have anything to do with the mention of food.

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Next time: Mulan pops up while there’s more Swan-Mills family time.
6: The Ultimate Weapon

Emma found herself at Regina’s house. She picked up dinner, which was a pizza. Regina had tried to cook, but discovered another smell that did not sit with her. So, until her body could finally let go of the suddenly overwhelming scent of broccoli, she was in the bathroom and Emma was setting up dinner on the table with Henry. Emma thought it was a little odd that Regina did not have a witty comeback for when she suggested pizza, but chalked it up to the misery Regina had to be going through with vomiting.

“Is she going to be that way for the whole pregnancy?” Henry asked as he placed down their plates. He glanced in the direction of the downstairs bathroom.

“It should get better. I’ll make a note to ask her doctor, though,” Emma replied. There were a few things she wanted to ask the doctor now that she was ordered to sit in on appointments. But, the list she had was a good start. I better make sure she took her vitamins, too.

“Do you know what she’s having?”

Emma shook her head as she opened the box. She cut through each slice again, wanting to make sure they were separated well. “It’s too early to tell and your mom hasn’t expressed much desire to know.” Of course, Regina seemed to be a little distant from the pregnancy, carrying on like everything was normal whenever she could and often refusing to say any word that hinted at a pregnancy.

“What do you want?” Henry asked.

Emma blinked and looked up at him with a wrinkle in her brow. “Why would you ask? I mean, it doesn’t matter for me.”

Henry sort of grunted and cocked an eyebrow at her, like she was being weird. “If you say so.”

Emma’s forehead furrowed. She tried to process the question, but could not understand why he would ask that. The baby was not hers and she was only trying to help Regina. “You okay, kid? You want to talk about something?”

Henry shook his head. “Not really. Grams okay with you eating here? I know she thinks its weird.”

“Her and David, but I tell them I’m here to hang out with you and remind them that me and Regina are friends, so it’s not as weird. It makes sense.”

“It does. So, you really haven’t thought about if you want a girl or a boy?”

Emma frowned. “It doesn’t matter.” She did not see why he thought she would be so invested in the sex of the baby.
“I don’t think I care if it’s a boy or a girl anyway. I mean, either way, it’ll be cool.” Henry shrugged.
“What color should we make the baby’s room? When do we start even thinking about the baby’s room? We should do that soon, right? I should make a list of stuff, especially if Mom starts to forget. A classmate was telling me about pregnancy brain.”

Emma stared at him with wide eyes. There was so much to dissect in that statement. “Wait, who the heck were you talking to about pregnancies?”

“Tom Thumb.”

Emma rubbed the bridge of her nose. “And he goes by that name?”

“Could’ve been worse. I know Oliver Twist, too.”

“There are times when this place really hurts my head.”

“It’s cool, Emma. A lot of the kids at school are just like my friends from New York. They’re more willing to accept these lives than the ones they had in the Enchanted Forest, especially after going back to the Enchanted Forest and then coming back here. For a lot of them, it’s way better here. I didn’t know it, but Mom placed a lot of orphans with loving families and a lot of families kept them even after the Curse broke.” A proud smile settled on Henry’s face.

Emma smiled a little herself. “It’s nice to know your mom wasn’t totally heartless when she cast the Curse, huh?”

He shrugged. “I guess. Anyway.” He waved both hands. “Tom’s mother is pregnant, like really pregnant and he said she forgets stuff all the time or she’ll do something weird and just say it’s because she’s got pregnancy brain. Is that a thing?”

Emma scratched her head. “Kinda, but I don’t think you want to mention it to your mom. If anything, we’ll keep it between us. But, you’re right, there is a lot to do. Maybe we should make a list together.” She did not want to have Henry researching pregnancies on his own. “We can even include your mom.” It might be a way to help Regina adjust to the idea that she was pregnant.

“Include me in what?” Regina asked as she slowly made her way over to them. Her cheeks were flushed, but the rest of her face was pale.

“We’re just trying to get prepared for the baby. Emma said you don’t know the sex yet,” Henry answered.

Regina shook her head. Emma pulled out the chair at the head of the table for her and Regina slid in. Upon closer inspection, Regina still looked a little green in the face, but it was better than how she looked when Emma arrived at the house.

“I’m not sure if I want to know the sex, but we have a few weeks before we get to that point,” Regina said.

Emma studied Regina, trying to figure her out. She definitely did not seem excited to know the sex of the baby, but her demeanor could come from the fact that she just spent twenty minutes hugging the toilet. Emma just felt certain that was not the reason.

Henry’s face scrunched up. “Why wouldn’t you want to know the sex? Doesn’t that give you a chance to get everything ready for the baby and let’s people know what type of gifts they should buy you?”
Regina gave him a small smile that did not reach her eyes. “I don’t think I’ll be getting many gifts from anyone, present company excluded. I’m also not sure if I want anything from anyone.”

Emma felt like the pregnancy was still a sore spot for Regina and the idea that anyone would celebrate it seemed ludicrous. Emma’s heart clenched in sympathy, hurting to know Regina did not see any reason to celebrate her own pregnancy. To end the conversation for the moment, Emma placed a slice of pizza on Henry’s plate. He looked at her as if she had snakes coming out of her head.

“I can eat more than one slice,” he reminded her.

“Well, when you’re done with that, you can have more. We have a whole pie, after all. For now, worry about that,” Emma replied.

He did not argue and dived into the pizza. Emma was a little surprised when Regina devoured a slice with a smile on her face and then had another without a compliant. Emma sat up rather tall during the whole dinner, feeling she had done good. And, then Regina let out a moan, like the pizza gave her life.

Henry and Emma both paused for a second. Regina did not seem to notice, like the world consisted of just her and that pizza slice. Emma almost moved to cover Henry’s ears. Henry’s eyes went wide with terror. He knew he was hearing something he would never be able to un-hear. Emma would never be able to un-hear it either and it traumatized her in a much different way. She shifted in her seat, trying to get comfortable as her underwear got a little sticky. Do not dare think about it! Of course, her brain refused to listen to that and wandered into the gutter. Henry saved her from some rather inappropriate thoughts.

“So!” Henry said and quickly launched into comic book discourse. He talked through the whole meal, about almost everything. He talked his classes, his friends, and dozens of clubs that sprang up in school. Apparently, he wanted to join everything.

“I think you’re overexcited, Henry,” Regina said.

“Yes, pick one thing you really like. Maybe two if the timing lets you,” Emma added.

Regina nodded. “And remember you still need time to do your school work.”

“I know. I know. I’ll look into if you’re okay with my joining an after school program,” Henry said.

Emma’s eyebrows knitted in close together. “Why would we mind?”

“Mom usually wants me home after school,” Henry pointed out.

Emma looked over at Regina, who frowned a little. It sucked being put on the spot. Regina then smiled a little, as if downplaying how awkward things were.

“This is true, but there never has been much for a child to do in Storybrooke. I’m glad that’s changed. You should have a chance to find activities that interest you and allow you to socialize with your friends. You’re growing up and growing as a person. I’m sure these activities will help with that,” Regina replied.

Henry beamed and his grin looked like it might burst his face open. Regina chuckled a little. Emma could not resist teasing.

“Careful with that smile, Henry. None of us need to be blind,” Emma remarked with a laugh, putting
her hand up as if she were blocking the sun from her eyes.

Henry managed to smile more. Emma was glad to be able to see such a delighted expression from her son. She was also happy that Henry was very willing to help with the pregnancy. *He’s a good kid and that’ll make this a little easier. Not that it’ll be easy.* Of course, now she thought on how big and busy these months ahead would be. She definitely needed to plan and planning was not really her forte. *I’ll need a little more free time.*

“Hey, let’s play some games since you’re here, Emma,” Henry said.

Emma’s mind got lost in video games for few hours. But, even with the distraction, the pregnancy stayed on her mind, especially when Regina retired to bed before it was even Henry’s bedtime. Emma was trusted to get Henry to bed on time and to lock up when she left. She made sure to do both.

For a long moment, Emma stood at the front door and considered staying. She thought about Regina’s morning sickness and her reaction to certain smells. She saw the fatigue set in that night and how Regina dragged her body upstairs. It was not fair to leave Henry to deal with Regina if she was sick, but she decided against staying. Regina had not given her permission and she did not want to add to Regina’s stress.

Before she made it to her car, Emma felt a strange chill down her spine and it settled in her stomach. Her guts churned briefly and she turned back to the house. A light was on downstairs. She made her way back to the door as Regina opened it.

“Did I wake you up?” Emma asked.

Regina shook her head. “No. I just want almonds.”

“Should I go buy some?”

“No, I have some. I noticed your car was still in the driveway. It’s late.”

Emma shrugged. “Not really.” It was not late for her. It was only ten.

“The guest room is made up.”

*The what room? What the hell?* “You…”

Regina waved off the words Emma could not get out. “The choice is yours. I need almonds. Now.”

Regina walked off before Emma could figure out what just happened. The door was left open and she found herself going in. Was the offer a mood swing? Emma doubted it counted as that, but the offer had to be connected to the pregnancy somehow.

“You can get a better night’s sleep. I’m sure you wake up early to get here when we have breakfast,” Regina said as she reached into a kitchen cabinet and grabbed a canister of almonds.

Emma did not argue that one. She would get more sleep, especially since the Lil Bit would not wake her up. She decided to take Regina up on her offer and they went upstairs together. Regina showed Emma to the guest room.

“Goodnight,” Regina said.

“Night.” Emma found herself falling into the guest bed. She would not stay there for long because
she did need to take a shower. Before that, though, she decided to call her parents. She did not want them to worry.

“Staying at Regina’s tonight?” Snow asked.

“Yeah.” Emma was about to say Regina offered and thought it might have something to do with Regina not wanting to be alone, but that would open way too many doors for conversation. “It’s just… She offered for me to get a full night’s sleep.”

“I’m sorry Neal has timing that would put roosters to shame.” Neal was up with the sun every single day.

“Don’t be sorry. He’s a baby.”

“I know.”

“You deserve your sleep as much as the next person.”

“Thanks.”

“Goodnight, Emma.”

“Night, Mom.”

They disconnected the call and Emma went to inquire about a shower. She found a washcloth, towel, and toothbrush all right outside her door. Never let it be said Regina isn’t thorough… in all but this pregnancy anyway. Emma tried to put that out of her head and went to the bathroom for a hot shower. She collapsed into bed after. Like many nights since finding out about Regina’s pregnancy, questions about it floated through Emma’s mind. I gotta get organized. Just something to put her mind at ease, something she could do rather than wondering about why Regina was not more excited to be having a baby. Eventually, she fell asleep, but the questions were there when she woke up, silenced briefly by an awesome, hot breakfast.

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Emma sat at her desk at work and tapped a pen to the notepad in front of her. She was just jotting down the things she needed to do for the next few months, trying to remember what she went through in her pregnancy. She also checked the list Doctor Alexander gave her. She researched a little on the computer whenever David was not around. She did not want to take the chance of having him find out what she was doing and having too many questions. Once she gleamed what she could, she figured she would sit down with Regina’s doctor and see if she was good to go as far as what to expect when Regina was expecting.

She was distracted from that when she heard the door open. She looked up to see Mulan coming toward her. She smiled as a greeting and Mulan sort of smiled back. Her face was tense and she stood awkward, almost hunched over, which was weird for the proud warrior.

“Hey, Mulan. What’s up?” Emma asked.

“I was hoping to talk to you for a little while,” Mulan replied.

“I’ve got free time unless you happened to see a minotaur outside.” It was not a far stretch. A couple of days ago, a golden stag or possibly a golden hind—the witness was not sure which—was spotted in the woods. So, she was not sure what types of animals stalked the forest nowadays. Also, she hoped the golden stag or hind was just as golden deer and not a cursed person since they were
surrounded by crazy fairy tale things.

Mulan cringed. “I hope not. I don’t think either of us want to deal with that on a quiet day.”

Sighing, Emma shook her head. “There’s a lot of things I don’t want to deal with, yet they keep showing up in town. But, anyway, what’s up? What do you need? Take a seat.” She motioned to the chair in front of her desk.

Mulan eased into the chair, but did not look any more comfortable than before. “I wanted to talk to you about living in this town. I mean, I know it’s been months since the Second Curse brought us here, but the Second Curse seems just a little less thought out than the first one.”

Emma rubbed her chin as she thought about the Second Curse. She had very little details of it, mostly because her parents did not have many details of it either. The potion to make everyone forget was broken when the Curse was broken, but it seemed like the Curse was enacted with such haste that it was impossible for it to be as thorough as the first.

“In what way?” Emma asked anyway. Maybe Mulan could offer her something others were not able to.

“Well, the people brought over on the Second Curse don’t have the other lives the first ones do. They don’t have the memories the others do. Many of us don’t know how to live here and I want to take the initiative to learn.”

Emma nodded. “Tired of the Merry Men?”

Mulan chuckled. “A little.”

Emma resisted the urge to pump Mulan for information, especially about Robin Hood. “Living in the woods for your whole life isn’t for everyone.”

“It’s a little more to it than that.”

“I get the feeling there’s a story there, but I’m not going to ask. Unless you want to tell,” Emma said. It would not hurt to lend a shoulder if Mulan needed one.

Mulan shook her head. “I am not a weak-willed person.”

“You are not.”

“And I have spent many nights surrounded by men.”

“But, it gets tiresome.”

Mulan nodded. “I would like a chance to live… as myself. Does that make sense?”

“More than you would ever know.” There were times when Emma thought she would drive herself crazy trying to be the perfect daughter, sheriff, and Savior. It was exhausting and underneath it all, she forgot who she was. It was one of the reasons she ended up giving into Hook. She was just so tired, worn out, and rundown. But, the moment she realized that and began searching for herself under all the titles and insanity, Hook was not someone who fit into her life and she was able to work things out with her parents.

A small smile settled on Mulan’s face. “No, I think I understand you very well.”

Emma nodded. “Okay, as far as living in this realm, well, you sort of took a step in the right
direction. You’ve got a job, kind of with us.”

“Well, I help out.”

“You help out, but you get a pay check for it, which is good. You can save your money and get an apartment, which would be the next big thing about living in this realm. We don’t usually squat in the woods for our whole lives, unless you’re into that sort of thing,” Emma said.

Mulan shook her head. “No, I think I would like a house.”

“Okay, well, we can help with that,” Emma said as David made his way back to his desk after a trip to the bathroom.

“What are we helping with?” David asked.

“We’ve got money in the budget for deputies, so I think we should hire Mulan full time,” Emma suggested.

David nodded. “Sounds good, but who’s going to train her?”

Emma knew it would fall to her. David had the Lil Bit at home and was not up for any overtime unless there was a monster roaming the streets. She could understand that. It could work out for her, though. She would get out of the apartment for a while and not have to hear a screaming baby. But, what if Regina needs me while I’m doing this? Mentally, she slapped herself right after the question. If she needs you, she’ll call you. Sometimes, I can see why she thinks you’re an idiot.

“I’ll train her and get her up to speed,” Emma replied.

“Then, welcome aboard Mulan Fa.” David stuck out his hand to shake hers.

Mulan smiled and took his hand. “I’m still not used to given name and then family name.”

“There’s a lot of things that it takes time to get used to around here. But, we’re always here to help.” David motioned to himself and Emma. Emma fought hard not to roll her eyes. She was the one doing the heavy lifting here, after all.

“All right. I think we have all of your paperwork from your part time work, so we’ll put just shift all of that to get you full time. Do you have a checking or savings account?” Emma asked.

“A savings…?” Mulan grimaced.

“No problem. Take a seat. You got me and my dad here. We can do our best to get you up to speed on what you’ll need to stand on your own.”

“Thank you.”

David clapped Mulan on the back. “Helping is what we do.”

Emma ended up having to put away her “baby” list and move onto an “adult” list for Mulan. It was funny how she never thought of a lot of things she and David ended up putting down. It had to seem strange to someone from another world with no knowledge as to how anything worked here. In the end, Emma got an idea and called Regina.

“What can I do for you, Sheriff?” Regina inquired.

“Wow, I’m ‘sheriff’ now?” Emma’s shoulders slumped and her heart sunk a little. I thought we had
something and now she’s back to being so formal. Is this because of her feelings toward the baby? Is she going to start pushing me away?

“I assume when you call from your office it’s official town business. If it was anything else, I like to believe you’d call from your cell and you’d call my cell,” Regina pointed out.

And just like that, the hole that opened in Emma’s heart sealed. “You’re totally right.”

“I know. Now, what can I do for you?”

“Have you considered offering basic adult classes for the new citizens of Storybrooke? I mean, you already told me the town is larger than it seems and I can only imagine how many new people you have because of the other Curse. Is it good to have hundreds, maybe thousands of people wandering the streets with no idea how the world works?”

Regina sighed. “While you make a point, I’m not sure if this should be something handled by the mayor.”

“You want to do this at the local YMCA then?” Emma scoffed.

“That wouldn’t work. We don’t have a YMCA.”

“I noticed, which makes me wonder how you guys learn to swim, but anyway. If not the mayor, then who could I make this suggestion to?”

“Let’s start small. If we start doing everything through my office, it would be no different than if I were queen again and I have little desire to have people at my door with pitchforks and torches once more whining about how I ruined their lives or killed Bambi’s mom.”

Emma winced. “Okay, yeah, that would be bad. You didn’t actually kill Bambi’s mom, did you?”

“Are you serious?”

Emma had to actually think about that one. “No. Never mind. I guess I’m a little surprised you know about Bambi, but you have a kid, so of course you know the Disney movies. Wait, is Bambi real? Like, is he in the woods or some deer turned person?”

“Is this really the conversation you want to have?” Regina sighed.

“No, not really. The important thing is helping the new people.”

“That is important. Try the schools. There are new children, some in school and some not. You would be able to get the parents to come to the schools for such classes. Beyond that, I would say our local Catholic Church has done next to nothing for the town its supposed to service. Perhaps, the lazy nuns would like to get off their fairy butts and do something.”

“You’re so much better at organizing things, though.”

Regina let out a low groan. “So, really this call was to put the bug in my ear and then leave me to do all of the hard work?”

“Isn’t that what our team is all about?” Emma grinned.

“I need to make a trade.”

Emma laughed loudly, enough for David to look at her from across the room. She blushed a little,
but she did not offer him an explanation. After a few seconds, he went back to work and she went back to her phone call.

“We both know this is a good idea. If you do it, I’ll buy dinner again,” Emma said.

“You’ll bring greasy pepperoni pizza.”

“You ate three pieces of it.” Emma decided against mentioning the sounds Regina made while she ate the pizza might have been illegal and Emma had considered arresting her for solicitation. Henry might never be able to eat pizza again.

Regina grunted. “That’s neither here nor there. I’ll look into your idea. I think it would also be a great idea to take a census and find out just how many new members of Storybrooke there are and perhaps find out what parts of the other realm they are from. From there on, who knows how much planning and developing will have to be done. I want pineapples on my slices.”

Emma made a face, sticking out her tongue. “Pineapples do not belong on pizza.”

“Pineapples or nothing.”

“You’ll bring greasy pepperoni pizza.”

“Fine, but you’re gross.”

“And you also have to speak to Henry.”

Emma’s face scrunched up. “About what?” She hoped it was not The Talk.

“Tell him to stop downloading apps on my phone. I do not need to track this incident.”

“Ah.” Henry must have downloaded a pregnancy app onto his mother’s phone. Emma shook her head. *I told him to talk to her about that.* Knowing Henry, he probably had a good time imagining he was being sneaky and getting away with something. “Fine.”

“Then it’s a deal.”

“See you later.” Emma disconnected the call after Regina bid her farewell.

“Dinner plans again?” David asked.

“Nah. I just bribed Regina into throwing together adult classes to help people like Mulan adjust to life here.”

“You bribed her with pizza? The Evil Queen has a weakness for pizza?”

Emma grinned. “Yup, just recently discovered it.”

“I wish I knew all I needed to take her down was a Hawaiian slice. None of us would even be here.” David snickered a bit.

Emma laughed. “Speaking of here, I notice a lot of people aren’t dying to go home like before.” Not a single person had approached her about the Second Curse breaking wrong. *What if this is just how that curse breaks?* It did not make sense to her, but once was wrong and maybe twice was a coincidence. She did not want to try for a third time.

David shrugged. “I think after having a taste of both at the same time, they prefer here. Not to mention, this one didn’t seem quite like a kidnapping or mind rape in the way the first curse did.”
“I guess that makes sense. And no one minds Regina staying on as mayor?”

“It would be a little late to mind, wouldn’t it? No, Regina helped defend us in the Enchanted Forest. More often than not, she seemed ready to lay down her life for any of us. Of course, it was probably more a death wish/suicide attempt than to save us, but she did a lot. While people suspected her in the beginning, they’ve calmed down enough to remember that year in the Enchanted Forest.”

Emma’s chest bubbled a little. She could not even imagine Regina without Henry, not being able to get to him, knowing she had done the right thing to give him up, but having to live with the idea of never seeing the son she raised for ten years and basically slapped down a god for. “She was that hurt without Henry?”

David sighed. “You know what it’s like to lose a child, Emma, even if you’re giving him up for the best. You know what she went through.”

Emma nodded. She knew all too well and Regina had it happen quite a few times to her in so many different ways the wounds all had to be different. Did those things influence her attitude toward her pregnancy? Did it explain why Regina was almost blasé about the baby? Like she was trying to not love the baby as much? Emma shook her head. Regina did not know how to not love a baby at this point in her life.

With that, Emma wondered what Regina planned to do about her job when the baby was born. She never mentioned having a second in command. Emma was not even sure if Regina trusted anyone outside of Henry, herself, and maybe Tinker Bell. Tinker Bell was barely qualified to walk across the street in this realm, so she knew Regina would not let Tink have her job. Beyond that, what other plans did Regina have for the baby? Did she have any plans for the baby? How could she have any plans when she could barely say the word baby?

“Do you think the town would vote for a different mayor if they could?” Emma asked.

David scratched his chin where he had the makings of a five o’clock shadow. “Right now? I don’t think so. Hell, I wouldn’t vote for a different mayor and she tried to kill me on multiple occasions.”

“She saved your ass that much in the Enchanted Forest?”

“That and she’s made up with Snow and she just wanted to take care of Snow while she was pregnant. It was almost like she was trying to make up for us losing you. Now, of course, we all know Neal isn’t a substitute for you, but it was like the best she could do.”

Emma frowned a little. “She doesn’t talk about it.” Neither she nor Regina were sharers, but she wanted some insight into Regina. Something was going on, something made her disconnect, but then again, something also kept them together. Regina was willing to put up with her, forgive her, and dare she think befriend her. *Maybe I could start, open up to her a little, and she’ll tell me.* Emma was not sure if either of those things would or could happen.

He smiled. “She’s probably to busy eating three slices of pizza. Does she really eat pizza?”

“I kid you not.”

“With a knife and fork?”

Emma guffawed. “You’d think, right? But, no. She eats it like she’s straight from New York.”

David shook his head and laughed right along with her. Emma finished up her work and went to pick up the pizza. She was almost tempted to get Regina’s slices put in a separate box, not wanting
the pineapples to touch a slice she might eat. In the end, she left them there, having little desire to
catch offending Regina. While Regina had not shown signs of mood swings yet, Emma recalled
when she was pregnant, there were times when little things set her off, which was very dangerous in
prison. The door to the Mills’ household was unlocked for her when she arrived.

“I come bearing gifts!” Emma announced, thoughts of her own pregnancy fleeing her mind the
moment she crossed the threshold.

“Mom said you brought pizza!” Henry grinned as he charged out. His eyes lit up as he noticed her
bounty. Obviously, he was not traumatized from the last time they had pizza together.

“Yeah, just watch your mom’s slices. She got pineapples on hers.”

“Have you ever had it that way?” Regina inquired from the dining room.

“No, why would I waste perfectly good pizza by poisoning it with pineapples? Pineapples belong in
piña colada, not pizza,” Emma objected.

“You’re going to try it.” That was an order and Emma scoffed. She was not going to try that mess.

Emma was not surprised the table was all set. There was juice poured into wine glasses, even for
Henry. Regina seemed to like to use her glassware and now had a joke going about indulging, even
though it was juice. Henry thought it was hilarious. Their pizza was laid out on plates, just as before,
like it was a proper dinner. It tickled Emma, but warmed her in a strange way as well. She was not
sure why.

“Try this.” Regina held her first slice up, right at Emma’s mouth.

Emma’s eyes went wide for a second and then she blinked several times, not expecting the offer.
Henry, who was laughing about something, suddenly blushed and turned away, like he refused to
witness something private. Regina did not seem to think anything of it and just left the pizza there,
waiting by Emma’s lips. Emma took a bite, trying to avoid the pineapple, but the flavor was infused
with the pizza. She held in a wince and chewed, but then it fully hit her.

“Wow, that is good,” Emma admitted.

“I told you,” Regina gloated and she took her own bite, seemingly unbothered by Emma’s nibble on
her food.

“It’s not better than pepperoni, though. Or peppers for that matter. It just happens to beat chicken,”
Emma said.

Regina rolled her eyes and ate her pizza with a smile on her face. Later that night, Henry would ask
Emma to convince Regina to allow them to have a pizza night. It was not a hard sale. Emma
considered using pizza to get Regina to open up more. She would see how might go over. She also
talked to Henry about the app, which she decided to do as they played video games before Henry
had to go to bed.

“I just wanted her to be able to keep track of the baby,” Henry sighed, his shoulders dropping.

“You can’t just download stuff on her phone and expect her to use it. You should know that. You’re
going to stress your mom out,” Emma replied.

“Sorry.”
“Just talk to her before you do stuff like this. It’s okay. I’m not mad and she was just annoyed.”

“Okay.”

“No, let’s talk about the real important stuff. I got a list.” She decided to share some of the “baby” list with Henry. Nothing to freak him out, but to make sure he was included. He wanted to help out and she felt like she could use the help.

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Next time: Emma begins Mulan’s training and Ruby gives Emma a little advice.
Emma checked her phone as she rocked back on her heels while she waited for Mulan. She was at the gun range… of a sorts anyway. It was the best she could do on short notice with limited magic practice. Regina refused to just wave her hand and help. Emma tried really hard not to be bitter over it, blaming Regina’s hormones for her refusal.

There had not really been a gun range and Emma had to throw one together once she decided to hire Mulan full time. David helped somewhat, but for the most part, Emma had put hammer to nail, mostly, and managed three spots for target shooting. She already requested funding for a proper training ground and while Regina could fast track it, she could only make the wheels of red tape move so quick. Emma’s attention was caught by the sound of footsteps approaching.

“I’m sorry for being a little late. This place was hard to find,” Mulan explained as she stepped into sight.

Emma shoved her phone in her pocket. “It’s okay…” She blinked when Marian came up behind Mulan. “Uh… am I doing gun lessons for two?” She was not sure how comfortable she was with the idea of Marian using a gun. Regina would not like bullets coming her way anytime soon, regardless of who was shooting them. *I can’t put the baby in danger either.*

“Ignore me, please. I just…” Marian shook her head and shyly tucked her hair behind her ear.

“_She wanted to get away from camp for a little while,_” Mulan replied and she frowned a little. Emma decided not to worry about the “non-permanent” women. She imagined if Storybrooke had call girls or something like them, they were probably taking whatever money the Merry Men could string together. But, Emma hoped some of the “non-permamnt” ones were also girlfriends or potential girlfriends or even just friends. The Merry Men did not seem all bad.

“That has to be tough. Well, if you don’t mind being here, I don’t mind,” Emma said.

Marian shook her head and Mulan offered her a small smile. Emma motioned to the stand and they stepped over. Emma got the lessons underway, wanting Mulan to know her new service weapon just as well as she knew her sword.

“Can I still wear my sword, though?” Mulan asked.

“Why not? David carries his around. This is Storybrooke, after all. I’ve been in more fights where a sword somehow comes in more handy than a gun more often than I ever thought I would,” Emma
remarked and it was the truth.

The lesson continued for a while. Mulan was a fast learner, picking up how to work her service weapon and firing it. She would need time to adjust to the recoil and noise, which got a flinch out of her each and every single time the gun went off despite the fact that they all had on headphones. Emma’s phone going off, vibrating in her pocket, interrupted the lesson. She would have ignored it, but saw it was Regina calling.

“Excuse me, I have to take this,” Emma said as she turned away from them to answer her phone. “Hey, Regina, is everything all right?”

“I was calling to catch up on the latest deputy’s training.”

Emma glanced over her shoulder at Mulan. “It’s going pretty good.”

“I still don’t understand why you think weapons’ training should come before learning to drive or how the filing system works.”

Emma chuckled. “I lead with my strengths.” Did that sound suggestive? It seemed suggestive to her. She hoped Regina glanced over it.

Regina sniffed. “I’m not sure about that. I’ve managed to arrange for some of those adult courses you want. The first one will be next week. I’ve tried to figure out the basics of adulthood, but it was a bit difficult.”

“Who volunteered to give the lesson?”

“Oh, you mean our amazing sheriff won’t be the one to give this lecture after it was her idea?”

Emma grunted. “I know you’re teasing because there’s no way you’d let me corrupt hundreds of people with my brand of adulting.”

“Not with you using the word ‘adulting,’ but I figured you’d at least show up.”

“Yeah. But, seriously, who is going to do this?” Emma asked. She wondered if anyone in town would do Regina a favor like this or if she found someone who thought it was a good idea.

“Kathryn has taken up the cause. I’m sure it will comfort you to know she is just as good as I am when it comes to organizing and will be an amazing champion for you.”

Emma shrugged, even though Regina could not see. “When did you talk to Kathryn about this?”

“I had lunch with her today since you decided to go shoot up the woods.”

The idea of Regina having lunch with someone else made Emma’s blood bubble a bit. She shook the feeling off, taking a deep breath and releasing it slowly. It was good Regina and Kathryn managed to become friends after the whole “used Kathryn for a murder frame up” thing. They probably had a lot in common once they got over their issues. Emma might ask about it, but not now.

“Anything else? Something pressing?” Emma asked, just to get her mind off of Kathryn sitting across from Regina, eating lunch with her.

“Another appointment.”

Emma wondered when there would be another doctor’s appointment. She wanted to talk to the doctor and she also wanted to know if Regina heard the baby’s heartbeat. She felt like that did not
happen. Maybe if she could convince Regina to hear the heartbeat then Regina could be a little more present for the baby. “I’ll be there.”

“And I was wondering if you had any suggestions or objections for dinner. I’ve noticed you’ll eat anything, but some you eat slower than others. I imagine you don’t like wasting food.”

“I don’t, but what are you planning to make?”

“Something you wouldn’t be able to pronounce.” Regina’s tone was teasing.

Emma rolled her eyes. She recently learned Regina spoke Spanish, partially because it was her native tongue in the Enchanted Forest and partially because the Curse decided it would be her second language in a world without magic. Emma knew enough Spanish to get by, but she would let Regina tease her for the moment.

“Gimme the English version,” Emma said.

“Simple pork with rice and kidney beans.”

“Something tells me it’s not as simple as you make it sound, but it sounds good. I think that’ll be fine, but I’ll let you know what I like better than others since you think I’m not liking stuff, which isn’t the case. It’s more that I like some things better than others, which is why I eat them faster.” She glanced over her shoulder again to see Mulan and Marian whispering to each other. “Look, I think I need to go. Anything you make is fine, any time. You know I’m just happy to be fed. I’ll see you later and we can talk about that other thing.” She wanted to know more details about the appointment.

“Fine. Good day.”

“Good day?” Emma shook her head. Regina was so formal sometimes. You know Cora probably beat that into her, though. The thought took any amusement Emma had at how businesslike Regina could be.

“Are you now going to have a problem with the way I bid you farewell? Is it wrong for me to want you to have a good day?” Regina snapped.

Emma laughed a little. Does that dash of anger count as a mood swing? “Not at all. In fact, I greatly appreciate it.”

“Then, good day.”

“Bye.” Emma disconnected the call and shoved her phone back in her pocket. She turned her attention back to Mulan. “Sorry for that. Regina is just scolding me for deciding to teach you something complicated rather than something boring first.”

Mulan’s brow wrinkled, but Marian spoke up. “What does she care what you’re teaching Mulan?”

“Well, Mulan is now officially a town deputy and on the payroll. As mayor, Regina wants to make sure city funding is being used properly.” Emma glanced over at the targets they had been shooting at and then grinned. “I’d say they’re being used not only properly, but fun-ly.”

“Does she have a problem with Mulan being a proper deputy now?” Marian practically demanded.

Emma winced. “Not to my knowledge. Why does someone else have a problem with it?” Mulan had helped the town enough for them to all know Regina did not have a problem with Mulan being on the force.
Mulan shook her head. “Robin was just giving me a little hard time for this. He did not want me to do it.”

“Why?” It was a little disturbing to Emma that Robin would be in Mulan’s business to such a degree. She disliked the idea of him trying to stop her from getting a job. If only the other Merry Men were so ambitious.

“Deputy. Sheriff. It might just be in his blood,” Mulan said. She shrugged as if it was no big deal, but Emma could tell there was something a little more rotten going on at Camp Robin Hood. Mulan did not want to live there anymore and had gone against her chosen leader’s wishes to get a job in position he hated. *I might need to be more like Batman and brush up on my detective skills to figure this out.*

Emma shook her head. “So, what he has a problem with me because I’m a sheriff then?” Being in Storybook now was supposed to be about letting go of that nonsense.

“No, no, no! He doesn’t have a problem with you,” Marian suddenly insisted.

Emma frowned. *Forget the fishing expedition. Time to get to the meat of the matter.* “Okay, is there something I should know? Is there something going on over at the camp?”

“Nothing.” Marian gave Mulan a hard look, as if to say nothing they could discuss in mixed company.

With a sigh, Mulan nodded. “Nothing is going on. I just would feel more useful with a job.”

Emma decided to let it go for now. Once Mulan was working full time and got more comfortable with Emma, she might be able to get more out of her. But, she was going to make it a point to check up on the camp more. Well, maybe have David do it. She was not too sure how Robin or the Merry Men felt about her father yet.

“Then let’s get back to it.” Emma motioned to the targets. She decided not to care about Robin Hood, but she could not help wondering what was going on at the camp to have Marian here with Mulan and to have Mulan eager to get out of the camp.

After a few hours in the woods, Emma’s stomach let her know it was time to go before her alarm did. Mulan and Marian looked at her with wide eyes and she grinned. *A stomach that can be heard over gunfire. Should I be proud of that?*

“Come, we can buy you a little something as thanks,” Mulan said.

“That’s all right. You should save all the money you can. Besides, I’ve got food waiting,” Emma replied.

Mulan arched an eyebrow and smirked a little. “With Regina, yes?”

“It’s nothing like that,” Emma said.

“I just remember how eager you were to get back here before.”

Emma frowned a bit. “For my son.”

Mulan gave her a look. “That you share with Regina.”

“You do remember I’m your boss, right?” Emma hated that sometimes it seemed like she was
transparent, like everyone she had ever met guessed that there was something more there for her with Regina than her just being the mother of her son. Well, everyone except Regina anyway. Regina seemed to lean on the side that they were BFFs or something.

Mulan laughed a little while Marian seemed a little intrigued. Emma sighed and hoped Marian did not try to look too deep into it. They made it back to the cruiser.

“Can I give you two a ride back to the camp?” Emma offered. They had walked over earlier, but it was a long walk. It just so happened they were used to it.

“If it’s not too much trouble,” Mulan replied.

“It never is,” Emma said.

They all piled into the cruiser. Mulan had been in cars before, but Marian had not as far as Emma knew. The way Marian inspected the back seat certainly supported that. If Emma did not know Marian had never been in a car, she might have been a little insulted.

“It’s safe. It’s like a carriage, but better,” Mulan assured Marian with a gentle hand on the small of her back.

Marian nodded and eased into the back seat. “Carriages having nothing on this in comfort.”

“The car is faster, too. Mulan, maybe you should hang out in the back with Marian. It’s your first time, right?” Emma said and then she winced at the wording. Damn it, I am bad at talking. Thankfully, neither woman got it, but Mulan followed Marian into the back and shut the door. I feel a little like a taxi. “So, how are you guys adjusting to life around here? I know it has to seem like a lot.” Being in other worlds was always a lot to her.

“Mulan has helped quite a bit,” Marian said.

Emma glanced at them in the mirror. “Yeah?” She thought Robin would have been the bigger help.

“Yes. The… the Merry Men… they tiptoe about me too often. They don’t seem to know what to make of me, but Mulan has been eager to befriend me,” Marian said.

“The Merry Men have treated me in a similar way,” Mulan added.

Emma frowned. “Not the utopia you thought it would be?” Are the Merry Men actually assholes? Come on, guys.

“I like that they do good, but they look at me as if they don’t know what to make of me. It’s not because I’m a woman like many have. Marian prepared them for a woman warrior, but our cultures are so different and they don’t understand many of my customs and I don’t understand many of theirs. They expect me to adjust more than they would try to learn about my culture. I am happy to learn, but they do not seem to be as eager to return the favor and openly discuss how odd they think many of my routines and rituals are.”

Emma’s frowned deepened. “Well, that sucks.” It sounded about right for people from the Enchanted Forest, though. “What about you, Marian? I figured they’d be happy to see you back.”

“They were, the first few days. But, now, they watch me like some kind of phantom. They had grown used to me being dead and sometimes I feel as though they suspect me of something. I’m sure they don’t, but they look at me like I’m a ghost sent to haunt them,” Marian replied.
“I guess it would be hard to adjust to someone coming back from being dead,” Emma said.

“Yes, and they had grown used to seeing Robin stroll around with my murderer,” Marian growled.

Emma grimaced. “Well… uh… you’re not dead, so she didn’t kill you, right?” That logic hurt her head. Time travel did not make any sense and she was trying to figure out how the hell did her fooling with the timeline work. *Well, I always consider it a victory that the world didn’t end and Henry wasn’t unborn, so it was a good day.* It was a bad sign to hear Regina’s voice in her head calling her an idiot, right?

“I know you feel the need to defend her,” Marian said.

“Marian, you shouldn’t get worked up over the past. We have seen Regina do many heroic deeds. She has saved you twice,” Mulan pointed out.

Emma did not wonder how Mulan knew that. Everyone knew about the second save, of course. Regina worked tirelessly to find a cure for the Snow Queen’s curse. But, the first time was a little more obscure, in the woods with a giant snow monster out for Marian’s blood. *Does Marian confide in Mulan?* It would not surprise her. Who else did they have in a camp where they were both still technically the outsider?

“She saved me twice, but she also robbed me of my family,” Marian reminded them, a snarl in her throat.

Emma almost flinched. “Regina didn’t know.”

“And that makes it better?” Marian barked.

Emma sighed. “Of course not. She’s not that person.”

Marian rolled her eyes. “Oh, yes, she’s so kind and selfless now, right?”

“Like Robin is?” Emma snapped. The situation whole thing was not on Regina. It took two to tango, not just with the pregnancy, but with the relationship. Maybe in the past, the Evil Queen would have taken up with Robin, uncaring that she executed his wife, but Regina was different now. It bothered her and Emma would not let Marian act like Regina was without a conscience now just because she was without one when Marian made her acquaintance.

Marian grunted and sat back in her seat. Mulan looked back and forth between them. She did not seem to know who to help. They were both her friends and it had to be tough to see her friends fight. Instead of saying anything, Mulan patted Marian’s knee.

“Look, I’m sorry about that, but it’s not all Regina’s fault,” Emma said. *Not this time, anyway.* It was not fair that Regina had been trying to do the right thing and even that was taken away from her.

Marian looked away. “You’re right.”

Emma sighed and they were all quiet the rest of the ride. Thankfully, the camp was not too far, by car anyway. Mulan and Marian exited with low farewells. Emma barely waved her own. Before she pulled off, she got a chance to see Roland rush over to Marian, throwing his arms around her. That was a step up from the somewhat frightened child who did not know what to make of Marian when she first showed up.

Emma looked at Roland and realized he favored his mother in looks, which she thought he was lucky for. Would Regina’s baby going to look more like Regina than Robin? Emma certainly hoped
so, for everyone involved.

Before she could go further down that rabbit hole and discover that we’re all mad here, Robin appeared. He grabbed Marian into what was supposed to be a big hug. Marian hardly returned it. Emma suddenly felt like she was intruding. Marian turned to Mulan and they spoke shortly before Mulan gave Marian an awkward smile and Marian walked off with Robin. Robin turned to give Mulan a nasty look. Mulan, proving she was better than Emma, did not flip him the bird in return.

“I’m sure the sooner Mulan gets away from this shit show, the better,” Emma commented and then she drove off. She did not have time for any more crap. There was a hot dinner waiting for her.

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Dinner was awesome as expected. Emma had two servings. Regina did not even make a snippy comment about it.

“Tough day at the range?” Regina asked as she eased Emma’s second helping in front of her. She had seriously made dinner sound way simpler than it was, which Emma was grateful for. She needed a hearty meal packed with pork, rice, kidney beans, potatoes, and olives. Toasted bread on the side was like buttered heaven to her right now.

“Tough day creating the range. What’s going on the budget for that?” Emma asked.

Regina chuckled and scratched the side of Emma’s head. It felt nice and Emma purred slightly. Then, Regina kissed the side of her head and Emma frozen. Regina walked off like it was perfectly normal, going back to the kitchen to refill her drink. Henry pretended to be buried in his dinner.

“So, we’re just going to act like that didn’t happen?” Emma said.

“What didn’t happen?” Henry countered.

“Fine.” Apparently, they were all mad at Mifflin street.

“Look, there’s only so much of this weirdness a guy can take before he just has to blind himself,” Henry chuckled.

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Weirdness with your mom or weirdness about the thing we don’t have a code word for anymore?”

“I’m fine with the thing we do have a code word for. I think we’re just not thinking when we use it.”

Emma’s brow wrinkled. “So, you don’t want to change it?”

“Change it to what? It should be something that’s not weird and that’s not weird. I mean, it’s not like we can use an animal or something. People might ask about Mom’s puppy or kitten or something.”

“Right.” I don’t want to think about his mom’s kitten.

“So, I figure we should just stick with what we have. Mom’s apple. No one would question that,” Henry stated.

“Why would you be talking about my apples?” Regina asked as she returned to the table.

Henry shook his head. “Not real apples. Just a way for me and Emma to talk about the baby in public.”
Regina looked between them, the hint of a frown worrying her forehead. “And why would you do that?”

“Because eventually we’re going to need to buy stuff,” Emma answered.

“Unless you want to start telling people,” Henry said.

“No!” Regina barked. Henry jumped in his seat. Regina looked down for a moment. “I’m sorry, Henry. I do not want to tell anyone of this.”

Henry’s forehead wrinkled. “Like ever? People are going to know eventually.” The statement made Regina scowl.

“So, what made you make pork tonight?” Emma asked, wanting to save the conversation.

“She was going to make steak, but we just had steak the other day,” Henry pointed out.

“What? I wouldn’t have minded steak for a second time this week.” Emma then shoved a forkful of food in her mouth. Okay, so she would not have minded anything really.

“We’ve had beef every night this week. I wanted something different,” Henry said.

“It was not a problem and Henry was right,” Regina said.

Emma did not argue, especially since it did not make a difference to her. It was probably good that Regina caved in on dinner. It was an innocent enough request from Henry and he would not have to feel like he was being pushed aside, not that he seemed to think that. Emma just worried he might be hiding his hurt. She and Regina were fairly good at that, so he might have come by the talent honestly. But, nope, he seemed okay, which was awesome.

As the night progressed, it was a little clear that Regina was not okay, though. She watched Emma when Henry went up for bed. Emma figured it was to let her know it was time to leave, but the way Emma’s stomach churned she could not move. She remembered the feeling from when she locked up Regina’s house. It was not as intense as before, but it was there. A burning, a bubbling fear in the pit of her stomach.

“It’s late,” Regina said. Her eyes glanced away, but then she stared directly at Emma, as if trying to be super normal.

“Yeah, I guess I should go home,” Emma replied.

“The room is still made up, if you want.” The statement was made in a businesslike tone, but the fact that it was made point blank made Emma pause.

Emma blinked. Did Regina not want her to leave? Honestly, Emma did not want to. She worried over Regina and the baby most nights. It would feel a lot better to know they were a room away rather than miles away.

With a nod, Emma smiled. “I’d like that.”

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Emma had a free moment at work. Regina was supposed to get some prenatal testing for the baby later on. Emma had been looking it up and found out a little more about the baby. Regina was eleven weeks in now. She had an ultrasound, but did not seem too interested. Emma was interested enough
for both of them. Seeing the baby and hearing the heartbeat did not move Regina, but Emma took it as good sign whenever Regina scheduled the next appointment and did not hurt Emma or Doctor Alexander when they talked about the pregnancy.

Now, at eleven weeks, Regina had crazy cravings for things she did not usually eat, like right now, she texted Emma to go get her one of Granny’s “Everything Burgers.” It was a giant burger where the customer could put whatever they wanted, as long as it was on the menu. Regina wanted the works, plus avocado, peppers, and a boiled egg. Emma was not sure how she would explain that, especially since she was about order a burger for herself, too.

Emma strolled into the diner and Ruby looked at her before the door even shut. Emma was not sure what it was about and was not sure what to make of the smile that slowly curled onto Ruby’s face. Emma hesitated in making her way to the table.

“Why are you looking at me like that?” Emma asked.

“Nothing. It’s just a been a while. Every time I call you to hang out, you’re doing something. I can’t hang out with your mother since she’s still got the baby,” Ruby replied.

Emma shook her head. “She could ask me and Henry to babysit to hang out with you.”

“Or you could hang out with me.” Ruby leaned in close and then paused. She shook her head and squinted as she regarded Emma. “Emma…?”

“What?”

Ruby shook her head again. “Never mind. What can I get for you?”

“I need two Everything Burgers. My usual one and one with the works plus avocado, peppers, and a boiled egg on it.”

Ruby blinked. “A boiled egg? Not a fried egg?”

Emma shook her head. “Nope. Boiled.”

Ruby frowned a little. “What the heck is Henry eating?”

“It’s not for him,” Emma said before she could stop herself. She slapped her hand over her mouth. Damn it.

Ruby narrowed her gaze. “You’re buying a burger, but not for Henry? I know it’s not for David since he was just in here ten minutes ago, ordering lunch for him and your mom. What’s going on? Oh, are you taking Regina lunch again?”

“Can you not make this weird?”

Ruby giggled. “It’s not weird. I mean, it’s not like it’s the first time you’ve bought lunch for her. Why are you acting like this is so weird?”

Emma shook her head enough to make herself dizzy. “I’m not making this weird.”

“You are.” Then Ruby blinked. “Wait, Regina wants a burger with the works, avocado, peppers, and a boiled egg?”

“Ruby.”
Ruby threw her hands up. “Okay. You want to prank the Queen that’s on you. Don’t call me when you’ve got a fireball in your ass.”

Emma shook her head. Ruby chuckled as she walked off. Emma took a breath and tried to act like that was not awkward and she had made it that way. How was she going to keep things quiet if she was running little errands for Regina like this? But, then again, Ruby was right. She did things like grab lunch for Regina. She needed to stop acting like she was sneaking around. Regina was her friend. They were friends. They had lunch together. It was not a secret.

“Well, well, well, look what the breeze blew in,” Hook commented as he entered the diner.

Emma groaned and palmed her face. “Not now, Hook.” Can’t he just stay at the freaking dock and make both of our lives easier?

“It’s back to Hook now, love? Not too long ago you would practically purr Killian,” he remarked with a smirk on his face.

“You need to lay off the magic mushrooms. I don’t think that’s how it went. Look, can we not to do this?” It would suck to share a small town with her stalker ex-boyfriend, but she had hoped that the town was larger than it seemed. Regina kept implying it was, damn it.

He cocked an eyebrow and continued to smirk. “Do what?”

“Do this thing we’re about to do. You’re either going to try to convince me it was a mistake to leave you—”

His eyes danced. “Which it was.”

“Or get all angry because I left you.”

He snarled and slammed his hand on the counter. “Because you did! Without an explanation at that.”

“No, I did explain to you. This wasn’t going to work. Our whole relationship was based on emotional turmoil and trauma. The second things calmed down, I realized that. Beyond that, you don’t know a thing about me and I really don’t want you to. I don’t even want to bring up all of the other shit right now. So, can you just keep walking?” Hook was the same type of bad boy a teenaged Emma would have followed around like a lost puppy, even when better boys warned her of them. She liked to think she was more mature than that now and understood the warning much better. Is that why you keep quoting Disney movies? She liked to think that particular habit came from living in Storybrooke rather than being callow.

Instead, Hook leaned in close, rum wafting from his breath. “Come now, love. Well, maybe later as well, if you follow me back home.”

“Hook, I will shoot you.” And she would not even feel bad about it. Not after the last time they spoke where he made it seem like she was an idiot for saving Regina from the Darkness or he seemed to think it was all right to let Regina die.

“I’ve won your heart before, I can do it again.”

“If you could try that from a distance, that would be great. Otherwise, like I said, I will shoot you and with the way you’re acting right now, I will feel no remorse over it,” Emma stated.

He smirked again, clearly in disbelief. He reminded her way too many past boyfriends and she could only wonder how she fell back into old habits so easily. There was a lot of crazy things going on and
you wanted a distraction. It worked until she had a moment to breathe and did not need a distraction anymore.

“Hey!” Ruby stepped over and probably saved Hook from a gunshot wound. “What can I get for you?” She grinned at Hook, who frowned a little. Emma took that moment to put some distance between them.

Ruby took Hook’s order and hurried away. Hook made his way back over to Emma, but Ruby was back before they got into it again. Ruby leaned onto the counter.

“So, Emma, Regina came in here earlier, you know?” Ruby said.

Emma blinked. “What?” Why the hell am I picking up lunch if she was just in here? Wait, what are you complaining about? The woman makes you breakfast every morning and dinner every night. The least you can do is pick up lunch when she doesn’t make that, too. Fuck, thank you, brain, I’m properly reprimanded now.

Ruby’s response brought Emma out of her head. “Yeah. She surprised the hell out of me and ordered a hot chocolate.”

Emma turned her mouth up to the side. “Regina ordered hot chocolate?”

“Oh, yeah. I thought it was weird, too.” Ruby glanced at Hook. Oh, I see what she’s doing. “But, yeah, so she was in here. She didn’t talk much. As you know, she’s not a talker unless there’s someone to threaten or insult.”

Emma chuckled and nodded. “That sounds like her.” Hook huffed and turned away, not enjoying the conversation. He made his way to the opposite end of the counter. “Thanks, Rubes.”

“None necessary. You’re too good for him.”

“Regina said the same thing.”

Ruby smiled. “She’s right. Just so you know, she really was in here earlier for hot chocolate.”

“Really?”

Ruby threw her hands up. “Yeah, I can’t make these things up. She wanted to make sure it had real milk and then she wanted to make sure it had whipped cream, which also needed to have real milk. She was very insistent about that.”

“She threatened you, didn’t she?”

“It went something like, ‘and if there isn’t real milk in it, I promise you you’ll be chasing your tail long before the full moon.’”

Emma groaned and palmed her face. “Sorry.”

“Yeah, and then she looked horrified and apologized.”

Emma’s eyes almost fell out of her skull. “She what?”

“I dunno. I didn’t ask a lot of questions. I was still freaked out that she wanted hot chocolate and not coffee or tea. The apology nearly knocked me on my ass. It was a serious what-the-ef moment all around.”
Emma nodded. She wondered how long Regina would hold out without coffee or tea. She might tease Regina about it when she dropped off the burger.

“And now you’re picking up a burger for her. Regina’s taste buds must be changing,” Ruby commented.

“I think she’s loosening up,” Emma replied.

“Loosening up…” Ruby smirked at her and looked her up and down. “Okay, we’ll call it that.”

Emma narrowed her gaze on her friend. “Ruby.”

Ruby laughed. “I’m just messing with you.”

Emma sighed and shook her head. Ruby walked off and came back with her order before Hook got it into his head to come over again. She rushed out while Ruby distracted Hook by calling him for his order, even though it could not be ready yet.

“Regina,” Emma said as she entered the mayor’s office with their lunch.

“Oh!” Regina practically squealed as she got up from her seat.

“Is that for me or the burger?” Emma teased. Regina looked happy, beyond a kid in a candy store.

“If you need it to be for you, you did deliver the burger,” Regina replied as she took the bag from Emma.

“Hey, I’ve got food in there, too!” Emma chased after Regina, both of them retreating to her desk.

“Plus, I’ve got the root beers.” Emma yanked the bottles out of her coat pocket.

“Did you include all the sauces I asked for? I need to have barbecue sauce all of a sudden,” Regina said.

“Yes. There’s also hot sauce on it like you asked.”

Regina actually giggled. Emma did not have the heart to tease her when Regina lit up as she bit into the burger. All Emma could feel was pride. It straighten her spine and filled her belly more than her lunch ever could.

“It’s so good,” Regina moaned. The sound hit Emma in the guts.

“Did you have a craving for hot chocolate earlier?” Emma asked.

“Oh, yes. I’m not sure where it came from. I think it was because Pearl was eating chocolate earlier.”

“Why didn’t you send her out?” Pearl was Regina’s faithful assistant. Regina liked to describe her as a “clumsy little waif,” but she had yet to fire Pearl and Emma had not seen the young woman make a single mistake on the job.

“I didn’t think about it. I just needed hot chocolate at that moment. It’s not like it was a long walk or anything. Besides, I’m supposed to be exercising at this stage.”

“But, you couldn’t go out and get your own burger?”

Regina frowned and licked a little bit of sauce off of her thumb. Emma shifted in her seat a little. She might not survive lunch if Regina kept this up.
“Maybe I wanted to see you for lunch,” Regina admitted quietly.

“Oh.” Emma doubted she could sit up even straighter at that point. “Okay. Um… good.” Emma bit into her own burger. “You can… you know… do that whenever you want.”

“I’m sure I’ll continue having junk cravings.”

Emma scoffed. “Yes, use me for my junk food.”

“As you use me for breakfast and dinner, which I don’t begrudge as I’m sure I’m a better cook than your mother.”

Emma rolled her eyes and decided to steer clear of that conversation. Regina did cook better than her mother, but part of that was on Regina. Mary Margaret had been a terrible cook, so Snow did not have much to draw on in either life. “We do have to make sure you eat right, though. You still have the list I sent you, right?”

“Yes, Emma, I have the list. You have noticed those foods in our meals. Plus, there is avocado and eggs on this burger, is there not?”

Emma nodded. She had noticed Regina making foods that would help her with her pregnancy and she also drank smoothies in the morning for the same. Her morning sickness had finally started to lessen, so it was easier for her to take in things that were good for her. Or, today, inhale a giant hamburger and bottle of root beer.

“I’ll see you later tonight, right?” Regina asked once lunch was done.

“Of course.” Emma’s heart fluttered as Regina smiled.

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Emma had to hold in a laugh as Ruby’s mouth practically hit the counter. “No way are you actually picking up chili cheese fries with bacon bits for the mayor,” Ruby hissed. It was a good thing Regina could eat cheddar cheese or things could have gotten ugly after Emma pointed out she was not supposed to eat soft cheeses. Emma was not too sure what a “soft cheese” was until Regina made sure to clarify.

“Yeah, and she wants you to include some barbecue sauce packets. Apparently, that stuff is like crack to her now,” Emma remarked with a grin. “She put it in her stew last night.”

Ruby grimaced and then leveled a hard look at Emma. “Emma, what are you doing?”

“Excuse me?”

“I asked…” Ruby leaned in close and spoke in a low voice. “What are you doing?”

“I’m getting lunch for me and Regina. I do this a lot. You pointed that out yourself before,” Emma answered.

“No, Emma. No. We both know what I mean. You’re her errand girl now? Do you think this is smart? Hanging out with her, doing stuff for her, and always being at her house, right now? You need to get out. You’re already in too deep.”

Emma licked her lips and hoped like Hell Ruby did not know what she seemed thought Ruby might know. “I’m not her errand girl. I’m just helping her out.”
“Emma, you’re doing more than helping her out. You forget, I know your mother, too. She says you spend most of your time at Regina’s house.” Ruby blinked. “Oh, my god, did this happen by magic?”

Emma blinked. “Magic, what? No! What are you talking about?”

“Emma, I know you have feelings for Regina, but you need to get out while you can. You’re only setting yourself up for heartbreak.”

Terror crept through Emma and clutched every bit of her. *Ruby’s going to get both of us killed.* Emma tried to play it cool. “Ruby… what are you talking about?”

“I’m a wolf and I can smell lots of stuff. My sense of smell is more than you can handle and I can smell the difference between Regina a few months back and now. I can also smell the change in you when you talk about her. What’s going on here?”

Emma grabbed Ruby by the arm and practically dragged her into the back of the diner. “Okay, look, forget that crap about me. You can’t mention anything about Regina. That’s her business. Don’t tell anyone else.”

“I had no plans to tell anyone, Emma. Chill out,” Ruby huffed.

Emma sighed. “Good.” She had no idea how Regina might react to people knowing before she was ready for the public to be aware. Regina still seemed skittish about the pregnancy. She only talked about appointments, what she was supposed to eat, and her cravings. She never mentioned the reason behind all of those things. She still used words like “situation” or “incident” if the word pregnancy or baby needed to fit into a sentence.

“But, Emma, be careful.”

“I don’t…” Emma could not even deny it or pretend to be in denial about it.

“Em, be careful,” Ruby repeated sternly.

“I’m fine. We’re fine. It’s fine. It’s fine.” Emma was not sure if she was trying to convince Ruby or herself. It was fine.

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Next time: more Marian and Ruby.
8: Cheers Mate

“So, Mom is in her second trimester now, right?” Henry asked as he tried really hard to beat Emma at NBA2K. He just refused to believe she was as good as she was and now she was schooling her son. The way he glared at the screen made her want to laugh, but she held it in. She had to be a mature adult every now and then.

“She is that,” Emma confirmed. He had taken her seriously about not researching the pregnancy himself after not listening. He had seen things he could not unsee, so now he just asked her questions and she looked them up for him if she did not have already know the answer.

“Is her morning sickness going to go away completely?”

“Eventually. I think we lucked out with it lessening before now.”

He scoffed. “You only say that because you don’t hear her throwing up in the morning.”

He was only partially right about. Only when she did not show up to the house until it was “breakfast time,” but that was if she did not stay. She dunked on him in the game just to get back how he dismissed her time with Regina. He groaned and she smirked at him.

“I do sometimes and I do get to hear her throwing up in the afternoon and at night.” Emma had spent a few nights at the house when Regina’s “fits,” as she insisted on calling her morning sickness, set on at night. She wanted to make sure Regina was all right and Regina then insisted she not drive home so late. It did not take much to sell her on that, as she did not want to wake up when Neal decided sunrise was the best time ever.

“Only sometimes.”

“Okay, fine, I’m the one who has to sit and watch her put barbecue sauce on salad.” Emma was certain Regina’s list of favorite things went: Henry, barbecue sauce, cow parts, and whatever else existed in the world.

He nodded. “I feel like that might actually improve vegetables, but on salad, it sounds gross.” He twisted up his mouth and stuck his tongue out.

“Your mom is all about eating gross stuff now. She’s trying to hold off on the junk food, but the woman will down red meat like it’s the only thing that will keep her alive.”

Henry snickered. “It’s good you always remind her to eat something green.”

Emma nodded. “Yeah, now if only she didn’t make us eat it with her that would be great.”

“True, but we get a lot of good breakfast stuff out her.”
“From all your bragging, I think she was making good breakfast before the kidlet showed up. But, I gotta say, I’ve never had oatmeal with so many different things. It’s really good with fresh berries and honey in it.”

Henry nodded. “It is. I liked when she put the nuts in it, too. I never thought that would work, but she made it work.”

“Yeah, I’ve learned never doubt your mom when it comes to food. She’s good at finding ways to get her pregnancy foods in while making great meals for us.” Emma was forever grateful for that.

“Should we start building the nursery or what? I feel like we should.”

“Well, I’d be right there with you, bud, but we don’t know the sex yet.” Emma felt like designing a child’s room needed more information than its about the size of a goldfish.

“And we won’t know for a couple more weeks, right?” Henry sighed.

“More than that. I think we still have a month or so before we can find that out.” Emma glanced at the stairs. Regina was up there, taking a nap on this calm Saturday. “I don’t know if she’ll want to know, though.”

“She’ll have to want to know. I mean, we have to come up with names and stuff. Are you going to go shopping with her for new clothes? She won’t be able to wear her usual stuff for much longer, right?”

Emma sighed. Regina had not mentioned anything about clothes shopping, but Henry was right. Soon, Regina would show and she would only get bigger as time went on. Regina needed to be prepared for her growing belly. She could not have many more outfits in her seemingly endless wardrobe to keep up with the baby. Well, Emma knew what issues she would have to tackle tonight when it was just her and Regina. That’s probably not going to go over well, but I gotta try.

Emma made it through the day before it was time to have the clothing talk with Regina. It was fairly late at night when Henry retired to his room, leaving the living room to his mothers. Emma was almost certain he hung out that long on purpose to give her a chance to get her thoughts together, but he also went to bed without being told for perhaps the first time since Emma knew him. So, that was probably on purpose, too, but he needed the time to himself. Is he still processing the pregnancy? He seemed really cool about it. Too cool for Emma’s comfort, but then again, it was Henry. Typical reactions were not really his thing. Emma shook the thought away as Regina sighed, stretched out on the sofa, and shoved Emma with her feet.

“Hey, watch those things,” Emma said, pretending to glare at the offending toes.

“You’re in their way,” Regina replied.

Emma rolled her eyes, but pulled Regina’s feet into her lap. Quiet time on the couch between her and Regina had quickly become a habit after starting a couple of weeks ago. It began when Emma had overeaten, dinner and dessert, and could not move for a while. Regina put her legs on Emma’s lap and Emma massaged her calves, her ankles, and even her feet. Regina made some of those noises that would have scarred Henry if he had been downstairs to hear.

“Regina… um… so… when are we going to get some maternity clothes?” Emma asked.

Regina frowned. “I don’t need that.”

“Not now, but you will eventually, right?” Emma gulped. What if Regina regretted the idea of
keeping the baby and actually had changed her mind? Why should I care? It's Regina’s kid and her body. It did not matter. She did care and she did not want Regina to get rid of the baby.

Regina sighed and her shoulders slumped. “I suppose…”

“So, when do you want to go? I was reading that you really should enjoy your time without the baby because when they baby comes you’ll be so busy. But, I guess you know that since you had Henry since he was practically a newborn, right?” Emma gave an awkward smile. Her face felt weird. In fact, it hurt a little. It would always be a sore point that she could not keep Henry, but things felt like something beyond that.

“Emma,” Regina said.

“Huh?”

“I know…” Regina took a breath. “I know I seem a little… blasé about this situation, but I’m not. It’s a lot to wrap my mind around, but I’m trying. I want to thank you for being here. You help keep me grounded.”

Emma nodded. “No place else I’d rather be.” I hope I can get to the point where she can actually say the word baby, though. Hopefully before the kid goes off to college.

“Are you sure?”

Emma laughed. “You think I rub down just any woman’s legs?”

Regina smirked at her. “I suppose not. You’re here. I understand that. You’re here.” She swallowed and put her hand on her stomach. “The… baby… is here, too. You don’t have to worry about that.”

Emma’s breath hitched in her throat. Regina must have realized she worried over the baby’s fate. But, Emma had other worries now. What did it mean for her when the pregnancy was over? She was too scared to voice that question.

“Are you going to find out the baby’s gender? Henry is chomping at the bit to start the nursery and I’d like to get a jump on it, too. You know, have home all ready for when the apple falls from the tree,” Emma remarked with a grin.

Regina shook her head, but her eyes sparkled a little. “I’m not sure I want to know. You can find out if you like.”

Emma blinked. “You’d be okay with me knowing?”

Regina shrugged. “It makes no difference to me. I don’t want to know, though.”

Emma frowned a little. Were the hormones making Regina so indifferent? Or maybe Emma was reading too much into it. She just thought Regina would be excited to have another child, even if it was by Robin Hood. She was not sure what to make of the attitude and it was starting to bother her.

“Did you ever get to research how this could happen?” Emma asked. Maybe that could help her get an insight on Regina. If Regina was close to how she got pregnant, maybe she could then accept the pregnancy.

“I looked into a few books. Nothing made sense. I don’t see how this could be a curse or magic, though. My potion should’ve been foolproof. I don’t understand.” Regina sighed and her face fell.
“You’ll figure it out. Grab a violin and play it while you try to think it out.”

Regina squinted at her. “Sherlock reference?”

Emma grinned. “You might be my geek dream.”

Regina sucked her teeth. “I suppose it could’ve been worse. You could’ve meant The Great Mouse Detective.”

Emma chuckled. “I’m going to excuse the fact that you know that since I’m aware that was one of Henry’s favorites, but it’s funny you know it. So, no answers for the pregnancy?”

Regina frowned. “The incident remains a mystery.” Thick silence fell over them.

“We on for lunch tomorrow?” Emma asked, just wanting to make sure none of this angered Regina.

“Of course.”

“Want me to bring some junk food? I don’t think you’ve had any this week.”

“Let’s wait and see. I’m not feeling good about my sudden attraction to red meat and the fact that I can’t be within a hundred yards of cooked broccoli.”

Emma snickered and pointed to Regina’s belly. “That kid knows what’s up.”

With a light snort, Regina rolled her eyes. “Of course you would say that.”

“I know what’s good and the way you devoured those tacos I made the other night, I think it’s safe to say you know what’s good to.” Yes, Emma got to display a little of her cooking talent every now and then. Regina pretended like everything was bland or subpar, but she always ate everything Emma made.

Regina smiled and Emma felt like light shone on her. She could get used to this and she knew this was what Ruby warned her about. It was calm, peace, domestic. It felt like home. Except, this was not home. Home was with her parents and a noisy brother who found a joy in banging things. She loved them to death, but there was something different here. Not exactly more and not exactly better, but it clicked.

-8-8-8-8-

Emma snickered as she read the text message from Regina. Apparently, the mayor had a craving for hot chocolate, which was not uncommon. But, that time, she wanted it with cinnamon. Emma would have to tell Henry about it later on, especially since she was certain she got the errand because Regina was too embarrassed to make the order after having nothing but bad things to say about the drink to her and Henry.

She entered Granny’s and paused in the doorway. The last few times she had been there, Hook had bothered her yet again, but he was not the problem that time around. No, Robin Hood was in a booth with his family. She was not sure what was going on with them, but it did not appear to be a loving outing. She tried to ignore it and walked to the counter. Ruby was at her immediately.

“You’re not even working the counter today,” Emma pointed out.

“I know, but I love hearing what errand you’re on. So, what does her Majesty want now?” Ruby inquired with a smirk.
“You’re lucky we’re friends.” Emma playfully shook her fist at Ruby. “Lemme get a hot cocoa with whipped cream and cinnamon.”

Ruby’s eyes went wide for a second. “Dude, are you sure there was no… magical connection between you two? You can tell me.”

Emma huffed. “No. She doesn’t…” Emma shook her head. She did not want to think about it. Regina did not feel like that about her. Regina kept her around because the pregnancy made Regina nervous or maybe even scared.

Ruby arched an eyebrow. “Really? She spends a lot of time with you for someone who doesn’t.”

Emma sucked her teeth. “Look, just be aware there was no magical connection.”

“Much to your chagrin, eh?” A devilish smirk danced on Ruby’s face.

Emma huffed. “Can you just make the drink?”

“I could, but then I wouldn’t be able to watch you sweat like this.”

“I think our friendship might be in trouble.”

Ruby laughed and strolled off to get started on the order. Emma tried not to look at Robin, but found it impossible. She was at least discrete, so he would not realize she was staring. He had Roland tucked in close to him, almost smothering in a way. Marian was facing Emma and she was frowning with her eyes locked on Robin. There seemed to be trouble in paradise.

“Hey, Rubes,” Emma called her over.

Ruby glided back to her. “What’s up?”

“You know what’s the deal between the latest power couple in Storybook?” Emma asked, nodding slightly in the Locksleys’ direction.

“I haven’t heard much. You know they kind of keep to themselves. Even the Merry Men, when they come into town and flirt, and drink, and do whatever, they don’t really like talking about them, even Alan and I couldn’t shut him up if I covered his mouth with duct tape. I think it makes them uncomfortable.”

Emma’s brow wrinkled. “What it?”

Ruby sighed and rubbed the back of her head. “Marian being back.”

Emma’s face fell. “That’s awful. They should be helping her adjust.” Damn, how does she feel having to be around people who aren’t happy she’s alive and uncomfortable she’s walking among them?

“I’m sure they are or at least they try to, but they need to adjust, too. Remember, she’s been dead for five years as far as they’re concerned.”

Emma scowled. “So, that makes you uncomfortable?”

“It seems to be the case with them. I’ve never really had anyone return from the dead on me to find out personally. They whisper about her and if it’s really her. They talk about small things that are different and seem to suggest it could be an imposter.”
Hazel eyes went wide. It never occurred to Emma that could be a fake Marian. “You think…?”

Ruby shook her head. “They don’t seem to take into account of course she’s going to be different in a strange setting and having a child who doesn’t know her and a husband who seems to be quite different from the man she married. Some of them are a little rude and have actually compared Marian to Regina. They seem to be under the impression Regina is a freak in the sheets.” Ruby gave her a hard look.

Emma sighed. “Ruby, we both know I have no idea.” Maybe from lack of trying. If Emma could punch her brain and it not hurt her, she would do it.

With a chuckle, Ruby shrugged. “I figured she might share with you since you’re pals or whatever now. You are fetching her drinks and all. You don’t have girl talk and crap at lunch?”

Emma snorted. “Do you have girl talk with my mom when you two have lunch?”

“You don’t want to know the answer to that. They’re your parents, after all. Anyway, I’m hoping the Merry Men haven’t said those things to her face. They seem like good guys or whatever, but sometimes even the best guy can say something stupid.”

“This is quite true. But, have they said anything about the marriage?” Emma asked.

“Not much. I don’t think they’re outside together a lot.”

Emma nodded. She was not sure how often she saw them out while she was patrolling. Granted, it was cold as hell, but she figured she would see them every now and then, going somewhere for a family outing. Emma wished she could talk to Regina about it, but she knew Regina did not want to hear anything about Robin and his family.

“It’s gotta be tough for her, though,” Ruby said.

“What, her husband was dating the woman who killed her… or would have killed her… or whatever?” Emma held her head. She might have to stream Back to the Future again, just to catch up on how time travel was supposed to work. That and I have to ask Henry which Harry Potter that was where they went back in time. No, no, no. If I do that, he’ll want to watch the Flash again to “study” time travel.

“There’s that and she’s got this kid who doesn’t know her and from what I can tell, Robin doesn’t seem to want to share the kid either.”

Emma grunted. Maybe that was part of why Regina made him completely sign away his rights. She would never have to fight him for the baby, but then again, that did not go too well the last time Regina tried to hold on too tight to a kid.

Emma glanced at Robin, who still had Roland in his arms. “That’s awful.”

“Yeah. I’m not sure if she’s noticed yet, but he also has wandering eyes,” Ruby commented.

“No.”

“He doesn’t flirt with women or anything, but I’ve seen his eyes stray to a lot of asses. I’m assuming he’s an ass man, which makes sense with Regina and all.”

Emma growled. “Hey. You keep your eyes off Regina’s ass.”
Ruby snickered. “Don’t worry. I only glanced once and noticed it said ‘property of Emma Swan’ on it. So, it’s cool.” She held her hands up in surrender.

Emma sighed. “You suck so hard.”

“That’s what my girl tells me all the time. Lemme get your order. If you want to gossip a little more, tell Regina to loosen your leash and let you come outside to play tonight,” Ruby teased.

“I would’ve thought those types of jokes were beneath you.”

“Nothing is beneath me… except my girlfriend on occasion.”

“Now, you’re just rubbing it in.”

“You made your choice.”

Emma sneered at Ruby, who only laughed. Ruby finished up the hot cocoa and let Emma take it with limited hassle. Emma took one more glance at the Locksleys before exiting. What was up with that family?

“Here’s your drink,” Emma said as she entered Regina’s office.

“Could you take any longer? I need chocolate and cinnamon, now.” Regina practically snatched the cup from Emma.

“I believe the words you were looking for here were ‘thank you, Emma. I appreciate you ordering me what I needed to live and carrying it over to me personally.’ Now, you try,” Emma replied.

Regina was not even listening. She was too busy smelling the drink and moaning. Emma took a deep breath and stared at the ceiling for a long moment. By the time she turned back, Regina was at her desk, smiling with the cup to her lips. *Might as well get her while she’s in a good mood.*

“So… would you mind if I go out tonight? Hang out with a few friends,” Emma asked.

*Wait, does it sound like I’m asking her permission?*

Regina looked up at her. “Will you be home for dinner?”

“Yeah. I mean, this is Ruby who wants to go out, so I’ll probably be around until, like, eight or nine. Is that okay?”

“Yes, well, I suppose like me, you should use your time without the baby around wisely.”

“I—” Emma swallowed down whatever she was about to say. *Wait, is Regina implying I can stick around after the baby is born? Like I’m welcomed into the kid’s life? “Uh… Okay then.”*

“Do not come home drunk, though.”

Emma squeaked. “I wouldn’t dream of it.” She had not known she was expected to come back to Regina’s house, but she spent many of her nights there now. *When the hell did that happen?* She could not even remember beyond the first time Regina invited her to stay the night. The only reason she remembered that was because of the weird feeling she got right before Regina made the offer and she suspected the feeling actually came from Regina, like she was scared to have Emma leave. After that, it seemed like Regina always offered Emma a chance to stay the night. Then, it was like one day, she suddenly lived there. Her parents did not say anything, so it was not like she had a moment to be weirded out by the whole thing. Henry treated it all like it was normal, too, but she learned not
to look to him when something bizarre was going on with their family. Our family?

“Wait, do you have keys to the house?” Regina asked, disrupting Emma’s rambling thoughts.

Before Emma could answer, Regina shook her head. She went into her desk draw and pulled out her purse. She retrieved her house keys and handed them over to Emma, whose heart might have actually stopped in her chest as soon as the keys were in her palm.

“You can go make copies since you’re generally done before me. You and Henry should be home by the time I get in.” Regina turned her attention back to her drink, like nothing odd happened.

“Uh… thank you.” Emma hoped that was the right thing to say. She had never been trusted with house keys, except by her birth mother. No foster family ever gave her keys to the home. One family actually left her outside in the winter until someone came home. Does Regina know how much this means to me?

“This is practical. All right. I should get back to work, as should you, Sheriff.”

Emma laughed, mostly to cover up all the emotions she felt. Damn it, Regina’s supposed to be the emotional one! “You say this like I’m goofing off when you’re the one who sent me to get her cocoa.”

Regina just grunted, as it was totally what happened. Emma chuckled and decided to quit while she was ahead. She returned to work. Of course, she ended up back at the mayor’s office during lunch. Regina made salads for both of them, as Regina had to eat leafy greens, which she added to almost every meal now, but Emma was expected to supply the burgers and barbecue sauce.

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Emma made her way into the Rabbit Hole and hoped like hell she did not run into Hook. It was his usual hideaway spot, drowning his sorrows in rum and crying into his beer. The place was not packed, not just because of it being a small town, but also because it was a Thursday night. There was no sign of Hook, which was awesome. She could hear Ruby squeal with joy over the music.

Ruby stood from the table she had, which was full.

“Hey, you and your mom came out. I’d say it must be a full moon, but I know that’s completely untrue,” Ruby joked as Emma came close to the table.

“Wow, Mom, you left the Lil Bit?” Emma asked as she hugged Snow White.

“Your father thinks I should start to adjust to being away from him. Besides, I think I hurt your father’s feelings since I won’t leave him alone with the baby,” Snow replied.

“I’m sure he understands the last time you had a baby a dark curse ripped reality as we know it apart and left you separated from said baby for decades,” Ashley commented.

Emma winced, but Ruby shot Ashley a hard look. “Hey, no dark curse lines tonight. You know Emma is friends with Regina and at this point shouldn’t we all be? Thank you for defending our crummy lives in the Enchanted Forest and for bringing us back to civilization!”

“You only say that because you miss iPhones,” Emma remarked.

“No, microwaves are pretty damn cool, too, and this indoor plumbing thing you got going on here is the very definition of awesome,” Ruby remarked. “Here, sit down. You can sit with Mulan, who refuses to drink. Be a bad influence on her.” Ruby patted Emma on the shoulder.
“I’m the sheriff and she’s my deputy. I’m pretty sure I don’t want to be a bad influence on her,” Emma said. She took the seat anyway. Next to Mulan was Marian, who looked a little shy and out of place.

“Now the party can start! Shots!” Ruby crowed.

“So you can have an excuse to dance on the bar later? Dorothy, aren’t you supposed to be controlling this?” Snow motioned to Ruby.

Dorothy, who was parked next to Ruby, came over in the Second Curse when the Wicked Witch was up to no good. Emma was not too familiar with her, but she was Ruby’s girlfriend and she made Ruby happy. That was enough for Emma, but she would like to get to know the person who made her friend happy. So, I need to start coming out more or maybe I can invite them over. A poker night might be fun. It would give the group a chance to get to know Regina, too.

“Fine. Let’s be boring!” Ruby threw her hands up and dramatically slumped in her seat.

Everyone laughed at her antics, but it was good for loosening everyone up. Drinks were ordered, not shots, but alcoholic beverages. Belle looked like she needed a drink or two. Emma was not sure if it was because life was so hard with a powerless Gold or if Gold just made it his business to complicate Belle’s life. Emma had a beer.

“Have you tried any of the beer around here?” Emma asked Mulan. “I know it’s not as strong as the ale from the Enchanted Forest or whatever, but it’s pretty good to relax with. It won’t get you really buzzed unless you have more than one.”

Mulan shook her head. “I’m still trying to adjust to the atmosphere here compared to a tavern back home. It’s different.”

Emma nodded. “You’ll get there. Marian, what about you? Have a beer with me?”

Marian leaned over, so she and Emma could speak and see each other. “I suppose I will. I would like to experience more of this world. Maybe understand it. Besides, I need to relax.”

Emma slid Marian an unopened beer. “Everything okay? You know, beyond the obvious. The obvious that they were not supposed to talk about because Regina had them sign contracts disavowing any knowledge of her pregnancy.

Marian shook her head, but her eyes glistened and her mouth trembled a little. “I don’t know why I thought it would be easy. I mean, I’ve been dead for years to him, to them. Roland doesn’t know me.”

“I’m sure Robin talked about you all the time to him,” Emma said.

Marian nodded. “Of course he did, but it just built me up to something larger than life, something I now can’t live up to. Roland has been disappointed with me over many things.”

Emma held in a wince. What if at Granny’s Roland had actually pressed himself against his father, like he was trying to stay away from Marian? That had to hurt. “You just have to give the kid time. This is a big adjustment.”

Marian sipped her beer. “I know. Any advice? I was told you only met Henry a few years ago, but you seem so close.”

“Just be yourself. Me and Henry went through a lot and, plus, there were all of these other
circumstances. Things are different between you and Roland. Besides, what kid doesn’t want his mom?” Emma grinned. She noticed her own mother looking at her, so she gave Snow an encouraging wink. Her mother beamed. Yeah, they had their problems, but she would not trade her mother in for anyone else in the world… this one or any other one.

Marian nodded and smiled a little. Emma felt good about herself. Music started pumping and soon, she was sitting at a table with just her mother.

“It’s good you’re trying to help Marian,” Snow said.

“I wish I could do more. I mean, what does it have to feel like to think your kid doesn’t want you?” Emma wondered aloud. Her eyes trailed over to Marian, who trying hard to get Mulan on beat with the music to no avail. Marian deserved so fun and so did Mulan, even if Mulan looked like she was having the opposite of fun.

“Maybe you should ask Regina.”

Emma scoffed. “And make sure all my life insurance is up to date, right? Why are you trying to get me killed?”

Snow laughed. “I think Regina would like to help connect Marian to Roland. She and Roland got along swimmingly in the Enchanted Forest. I’m pretty sure he’s the only reason she didn’t pluck Robin’s heart out his chest their first… ten encounters.”

“Wait, what? She didn’t like him there?” Emma did not understand how Regina and Robin ended up in a relationship. Regina did not like him when they first met, she did not like him now, and she seemed to be on the fence about him when they slept together. How the hell did they have a conversation long enough to find out they were “soul mates”?

Snow shook her head. “Not at all. I’m not sure what changed here, but he got on her nerves in the Enchanted Forest and not in the charming way you do.”

Emma stuck her tongue out at her mother. “You and your best friend got jokes.”

“You’re the one spending a lot of time with Regina. You make it a little easy. You have to admit you grew on Regina.”

“And so did he apparently.”

“I think the Curse muddled things for her and she didn’t exactly understand the nature of their relationship back in the Enchanted Forest when we got here. Plus, she was rather disheartened to get back here and not have you and Henry waiting. It hurt her.”

Emma’s face twisted a little. “Me and Henry or just Henry?”

Snow tilted her head and regarded Emma as if she were insane. “Emma, really? She gave you her most precious person and you think she didn’t spare a thought for you every now and then?”

Emma sighed. “I don’t really think about it. It kinda hurts and then it would hurt more to know it didn’t hurt her that I was gone.”

“You don’t have to worry about that. You spend so much time with her now. You two never talk about that?”

“There’s a lot we don’t talk about.”
Snow frowned. “Because you’re both too scared to be hurt to find out if the other doesn’t hurt like you.”

Emma’s brow furrowed and she shook her head. “Wanna repeat that?”

Snow waved the question off. “You know what I mean. You should talk about it. What would it hurt?”

Emma thought about the keys in her pocket. She thought about how the guest room looked like her room. She thought about her favorite meals. She thought about lunches and smiles and doctor appointments. Regina said home. Dare I hope? Damn it, I’m Snow White’s fucking kid. Of course I dare!

“I think I might need a little something stronger than beer,” Emma said.

“Regina already told me what happens if you get drunk, so unless you want your bed in the loft and to be up at six in the morning, I wouldn’t do that.”

“Would there be pancakes at six in the morning?”

“Do I look like Regina?”

Emma pouted. “The pancakes would’ve worked, you know?”

“No, they wouldn’t. You’d have gone right to Regina to get scolded for being drunk.”

Emma shrugged, but she could not help the grin on her face. She decided to have the second drink, though, and she did a couple of shots with Ruby. She wanted to see how she would be received if she went “home” just a little tipsy.

The answer to that was Regina helped her out of her clothes while scolding her about drinking too much and making too much noise when trying to put her key in the door. Emma had not made any noise coming in and Regina had been up waiting for her, so it was not like Emma woke her up. Emma snickered the whole time as Regina settled her in for the night. She was not very drunk and did not even need the help, but it was nice to have. Regina even pulled off her boots for her. She fell into her bed and found she was definitely tired. It was a workout to keep her eyes opened.

“Thank you,” she muttered into her pillow. It felt like heaven.

Regina sighed and brushed Emma’s hair out of her face. “You’re lucky you’re cute. But, I’m here, just as much as you are.” She kissed Emma’s forehead and pulled the blanket over Emma. Emma was asleep before she closed the door.

-8-8-8-8-

Next time: Swan-Mills family outing after Regina admits aloud it might be time for maternity clothes.
9: Quality Time

“I think we might need to go…” Regina sighed and her shoulders dipped. She focused on her morning chore and put together breakfast sandwiches for Emma and Henry. She took a sip of a smoothie for her pregnancy. She had already eaten some oatmeal, which she had almost every day. She switched it up for Emma and Henry, making them other things at least three days out of the week.

Emma watched Regina, waiting for the end of the sentence. When it did not come, Emma put down her orange juice. Coffee was banned from the house until Regina could have some of her own. Emma had no problem with that rule. Her father liked bringing her some when they met up at the station. It was their thing. She might let him keep doing it even when Regina could have coffee again. It felt important, like father/daughter bonding or something.

“Come on, tell me,” Emma whispered as she stood hip to hip with Regina.

Regina sighed again and stared at the counter. “Maybe we should go shop for maternity clothes.”

Emma grinned in a snicker. To keep the laugh from escaping, she glanced down at Regina, wanting to take her in. There was a noticeable bulge, but it was usually when she was in her pajamas or just comfortable clothes. With her work clothes, she figured out ways to camouflage the baby bump. Emma’s hand moved without permission from her brain and landed on Regina’s belly. Regina gasped.

“Sorry. Should I—” Emma snatched her hand back, but Regina grabbed it and put it right back.

“It’s okay,” Regina whispered. She looked at Emma and her eyes seemed endless. Then, she smiled and Emma melted internally. “You’ve been here. You’re the only one who can really confirm this is real. Yes, I know there’s Henry, but he’s not there for everything like you. This is still so surreal for me, but it’s real for you.”

Emma smiled. “Yeah. It is. So, why do you suddenly want to go shop for new clothes?”

Regina frowned. “Your friend.”

“My friend?”

“I decided to go get my own cocoa since I’ve been fairly bad with the exercising.”

“Please don’t tell me Ruby said you were getting fat or something.” Emma could not imagine Ruby being that rude to Regina, but with the crap that fell out of Ruby’s mouth sometimes, Emma was not so sure. Maybe Ruby said something as a joke and Regina just did not get it.
“No, no, no. She actually said I had a glow about me and said I looked beautiful, but it called
attention to me. Usually, people just ignore me when I’m in the diner, but she said something and
now it seemed to be open season. So, one of the lesser dwarves commented that my ass looked big.”

Emma smiled and made a show of inspecting the aforementioned body part. In fact, she was quite
happy for the excuse. “He’s not lying.”

Regina frowned and turned away. Emma winced. *Okay, that was totally the wrong thing say.* But, it
was a very nice ass. Emma chased after Regina and wrapped her arms around Regina, pressing her
palm against Regina’s growing stomach. Regina gave a halfhearted elbow to push her away, but
Emma figured she had to be safe since Regina had not set her on fire or force-choked her.

“I didn’t mean it like that! Your ass looks great,” Emma said. *Ain’t that the truth!*

“Yes, well, unnamed bastard dwarf number one said it was looking fat and maybe my body was
blotting from evil,” Regina hissed.

Emma hugged Regina close. “You’re growing with awesome, okay? Don’t listen to unnamed
bastard dwarf number one. He doesn’t know anything. He’s a dwarf.”

“Can we start calling them that, then?” Regina asked with a cute pout.

Emma had to resist the urge to kiss the pout off of Regina’s face. Yeah, Regina gave her little kisses,
but she was not sure if she had the same right and she did not want to upset Regina even more. “If
that’s what you want, yes, I will definitely call them that. I will talk to them, too, if you want. Hell, if
you want, I will go punch him in the face right now.”

Regina’s eyes danced with deviltry. “It is tempting, but no. The last thing we need is for the town to
start assuming you’ve become my Black Knight.”

Emma laughed. “Well, they already think I’m your lapdog.” *I feel like since the person who implied
this is a werewolf, it should be even funnier, but it’s not.*

Regina scowled. “Who said that?” she demanded. Her eyes blazed and Emma was certain that if she
gave a name, someone would have no heart within an hour.

“No one, no one. It’s just a joke. I think you should give Storybrooke a little more credit. I mean, did
anyone laugh when unnamed bastard dwarf number one said you were blotting with evil?” Emma
doubted anyone even giggled at that.

Regina relaxed a little. “Well, no.”

“But, no one stopped him?” Emma guessed.

Regina sighed. “Well, not exactly that either. Your friend made sure to put unnamed bastard dwarf
number one in his place.”

Emma grinned proudly. “Go ahead, Ruby. See, not everyone hates you and not everyone thinks
your change is bad. Ruby even complimented you, saying you had a glow. Things will be fine. So,
clothes shopping. Is this an out of Storybook road trip?”

“I don’t want to hide this, but I don’t want them talking about it just yet. I’m still… processing.”

Emma could only wonder how Regina was still processing, but did not say anything about it.
Everyone went at their own rate. “Then we’ll road trip this weekend. Henry will like it.”
“This weekend then.”

“Can I drive?”

Regina scoffed. “You always drive.”

“You like it.”

“Should I come back later?” Henry asked, causing his mothers to jump apart.

Emma’s stomach dropped, feeling guilty for some reason. We weren’t doing anything. I was just comforting Regina, my friend. That’s perfectly reasonable and normal. Her stomach twisted a little, as if it did not agree.

“Of course not. Your breakfast is almost done,” Regina answered, sounding normal.

Henry shrugged and made his way out of the kitchen. Regina went back to work and Emma went back to her orange juice. Why did she feel like she was the only one who thought what just happened was weird? Before she could figure it out, Regina put a sausage and egg sandwich in her hand and pushed her out of the door to make sure she got to work on time.

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Emma planned to go shopping over the weekend with Regina and Henry. She just needed to let David know. If something happened, David needed to be aware that she would not be around to help save the day. And Regina would not be around to save the day.

“You guys are going outside of Storybrooke? Why?” David asked from his desk. He tossed a paper ball at the trashcan, missing for the fifth time. “I mean, I know you’re all friendly and whatever, but why not just hang out here?”

“It’s not really hanging out. It’s more like a family outing, I guess,” Emma replied, feet kicked up on her own desk. It was not a lie. They would turn a little shopping trip into a weekend getaway. Henry would love it and it would give Regina a chance to relax a little before the baby came.

“You’re not trying to get Regina out of town for a while to cool off, are you?” David asked.

“You know about the dwarf,” Emma said.

“It’s hard not to know about the dwarf. Happy kinda blurted it out for the whole diner to hear during the morning rush. Most of us thought she was going to burn the place to the ground.”

Emma was a little surprised Regina did not. She did not take to embarrassment well, after all, and she had a very understandable dislike for the dwarves, even if she was on good terms with Snow White. The dwarves did not know how to mind their own business.

“We were surprised and relieved when she just left,” David continued and then let another paper ball fly. It missed just like the others.

“I’m sure you were. She’s done a lot more for less, but, no, that’s not why we’re going out for the weekend. It’s seriously just some mother/son bonding time.” They would get a chance to shower Henry with attention before the baby came, which could only be a good thing.

David nodded, but arched an eyebrow while staring her down. “And has absolutely nothing to do with Happy? I mean, if it does, I understand. I figured you stayed over last night with her to help
“I stayed the night because I was there late.” And, yes, she wanted to make sure Regina was all right. She could not say that, though.

“You’re there late a lot. You keep Henry up late?”

“No. Regina would kill me.”

“Exactly! So, are you sure this has nothing to do with Happy?” David pressed.

“Nothing, but he’s lucky she didn’t magic his tongue away. What kind of man comments on a woman’s weight, especially when that woman has been known to choke a bitch,” Emma remarked.

David shook his head. “The dwarves don’t learn little things like never comment on a woman’s weight because they’re technically gender less.”

“But, they have memories for this world, too. Somewhere in all that data, they have to know that’s a pretty big sin.”

David laughed. “They seem to like ignoring the programing they got for this world.”

“That’s all well and good until Regina puts her foot in someone’s ass for saying the wrong thing. And then, they’re going to be crying the Evil Queen when they should just leave well enough alone. And, I thought things with Regina were better now.”

“Again, the dwarves are a little different. Most people can move past the first curse because things in the Enchanted Forest during that ‘lost year’ were bad. They’re also able to move past Regina’s offenses because of how many times she stepped into harm’s way in the Enchanted Forest and battled against her own sister for our survival. Most of them were shocked she didn’t betray us first thing and go team up with Zelena. Then, they saw she was willing to lay down her life to make sure we were safe and they just sort of… not accepted her, but accepted that she was different.”

Emma drew her eyebrows in close as she let that sink in. “And the dwarves can’t do that?”

David shook his head. “It’s harder for them. As dwarves, they made to do certain things and freewill isn’t as big a concept for them as it is for others. They’re miners. They mine. They dig. They create stuff with things that come out of the Earth. There’s not much of a chance for them to do that here and so they resent it, even though they would probably tell you their lives are better here. It’s just they’ll always itch to dig in the dirt and it’ll always bother them. So, they take it out on her.”

Emma frowned. *That sucks, but they can’t just bully Regina because of it.* “Can you talk to them? I don’t want Regina to roast one of them because they don’t have enough brains to figure out they can do other stuff beyond mining for a living.”

David shrugged. “I can try, but your mom might have more success. They’re not my biggest fans either, to this day.”

“Geez, who knew dwarves could be cliquey.”

The conversation was cut short when Mulan walked in. They both greeted her with matching, charming smiles. Emma could not get over how much she could be like her father, even though she had not grown up with him. How much did nature win out? Sometimes, in quiet moments, she could see herself in Henry, but more often, she saw Regina. *Will I see myself in the new one?* She shook that thought away. It was dangerous thinking.
“Hey, Mulan, my dad is going to cover your training this weekend if you’re still up to it, okay?” Emma said.

Mulan nodded. “That’s fine. We will do driving, correct?” That was what Emma planned before Regina got called fat and decided to hid her little bump.

“Sounds good,” David agreed.

“Uh… Emma, could you help me with something?” Mulan asked.

Emma was not sure about the hesitation, but if she could help, she would. “Sure, as long as you don’t want to know about, like, internet porn or something.”

“Oh, hello! Dad still right here in hearing range,” David pointed out.

Emma grinned. “What? I didn’t say I was going to watch internet porn.”

David threw his hands up. “And now I’m going out for a morning patrol!” He quickly exited the building.

“I don’t know what internet porn is and I don’t think I want to know. I do want to know about finding an apartment,” Mulan said.

“Oh, that shouldn’t be too hard. Storybrooke is more up to date now thanks to the Second Curse and Regina being a kick ass mayor, so we can just do a search on the good ol’ internet, sans porn.”

Emma grabbed her mouse and her computer monitor came to life. It felt good to not see windows 97 on her screen.

“What is the internet?” Mulan asked as she dragged an open chair over.

“What? They haven’t gotten to computers in your classes, yet?” Emma asked. She figured in this day and age, computers would have been the first lesson.

Mulan shook her head. “There have only been about four classes so far. One of the first things they suggested was to make friends with someone who had already been here before to show us how to do things faster.”

Emma smiled. “Aw, and you imprinted on me like a little duckling.”

Mulan narrowed her gaze. “You do remember I have a sword that can cut practically anything, right?”

“Just so you know, if you kill me, you then have to kill Regina and my dad.”

Mulan shook her head and got quiet for a moment. “You and Regina are close.”

Emma shrugged. “Yeah, we share the kid and we save the day and we eat lunch together. Typical friend stuff.”

“You live with her now, too, I hear.”

Emma frowned a little. Damn this gossipy small town. It was not exactly a lie. She stayed over Regina’s house more often than not. Regina insisted she use her keys and did not even have to extend invitations to her to stay anymore. At the end of the day, she just made her way to her room. Her parents were okay with it, Regina was okay with it, Henry loved it, and so did Emma. It should not be anyone’s business.
“I go between her house and my parents’ house, I guess,” Emma said. Of course, she could not remember the last time she slept at her parents’ apartment.

Mulan’s face did not change, no judgment or anything. “Is that normal for this world?”

Emma scratched her chin. “Not really, but it’s also not normal for a person to find out her parents are two fairy tale characters who are about her age and had to shove her in a magical tree stump to make sure she didn’t get caught in a curse. Mulan, this is a different world, yes. There’s tons of new things here, but one of the best things about anywhere is you can make your own normal. I think that’s what me and Regina are doing. We’re making our own normal.”

Mulan’s face scrunched up. “So, it would not be normal if another woman lived with me in this apartment?”

Emma’s brow furrowed. “Another woman…?” She blinked. “Holy crap! Is Marian moving in with you?” she hissed and hoped she did not sound like it was a bad thing. She just did not want to scream that loud enough for the world to hear. What the hell was going on with Marian and Robin Hood? Well, no, she knew the answer to that question. It was signed contracts and the reason she had to take the weekend off.

Mulan blinked. “Should she not? Is that not normal? I thought because of you and Regina…”

Emma quickly shook her head and waved her hands, certain she looked like a crazy person. “No, sorry. I didn’t mean it like that. It’s okay for two women to live together. It’s okay for any two people to live together. So, is Marian going to move in with you?”

“Well, I haven’t asked her yet since I don’t have a place, but I wouldn’t feel right leaving her at the camp alone,” Mulan replied.

“It’s getting worse?” Emma was not entirely sure what was going on at the camp, though. She could only imagine Marian felt more and more isolated.

“Please don’t spread this around.”

“I promise.”

“She and her husband have been arguing more over practically everything and it looks like the marriage will not work. Marian hasn’t given me all of the details and I’m not sure who Robin confides in or who knows what’s going on. I do know the Merry Men have chosen sides.”

Emma frowned. “And they chose him.” The bastards. How could they just leave Marian high and dry after all she had been through?

“He is their leader and she… she is a stranger.” Mulan’s shoulders dipped and her eyes glazed over with sorrow.

Emma huffed. “She’s been there for three months! That’s hardly a stranger and they knew her from before. Surely someone is on her side.”

Mulan nodded. “Yes, someone.”

“Just you.” Emma let loose a long sigh from her nose.

“She trusts me and confides in me. She is not happy. He is not the same man. She says she can hardly look at him sometimes. She hasn’t fully explained what she means by that, but I know it pains
her. He tells her that she’s the one who is different and how he can never be sure she is who she says she is. She should not have to take that and has no desire to. But, she worries over her son. I’m not sure if she’ll come with me because of Roland, but she is miserable and I dislike seeing her that way.”

Emma nodded. “She doesn’t have to lose out on Roland if she leaves him.”

Mulan focused on her as if she was the only thing in the universe. “What do you mean?”

“Well, that’s one of the good things about around here. She’s not Robin’s property and neither is Roland. She could legally divorce him and legally get custody of Roland or at least get visitation rights and he wouldn’t be able to do anything about it.”

With a nod, Mulan’s face hardened with concentration. “Custody? You mean she would have Roland?”

“Yeah. Although, I’m not sure if a judge would take Roland away from Robin since he’s been the kid’s primary caregiver for five years now. But, she could get rights to see him. They could have joint custody or something. I dunno. I just know he can’t lock her out of Roland’s life. I wonder if they’re even legally married here.”

Mulan shrugged. “At our first adult class, they told us we should all register for necessary paperwork, like birth certificates and marriage certificates if they wanted those things legally recognized. I do not know if she did the marriage certificates. She did the birth certificates with me. Ruby took us.”

“Because she had to take Dorothy or out of the kindness of her heart?”

“When we asked that, she replied, ‘can’t it be both?’ I don’t think it matters,” Mulan replied.

“This is true. It’s good she’s helping out, maybe doing more than I am in this case. Okay, so you got that, which is good. My dad will hook you up and get you ready for a driver’s license. You know what, I can ask Regina about this Roland situation if you want.”

“Can you not mention Marian? She very much dislikes Regina.”

Emma sighed. “Yeah, Regina gets that a lot. I wouldn’t really bother, but Regina just so happens to be friends with a good lawyer and I think Marian needs that right now.”

“Thank you so much for all your help,” Mulan said.

Emma sat up a little taller. “It’s what I’m here for. Now, let’s try to find you an apartment. Henry was telling me about a new block of condos that’s getting built.”

“He wants you to move out?”

“No, this was a little before I started spending so much time at his house. He was the only one who knew I wasn’t completely with Hook anymore, though, and he wanted me to find a place I wasn’t sharing with Hook. In the end, I just moved back in with my folks. It seemed easier.”

“It seemed like family,” Mulan said.

Emma smiled. “Yeah.” It helped her get on better terms with her parents, too. It worked out. She was certain it was that time that allowed them to get comfortable with her as a person and also understand her better, which was why they had not pressured her about spending so much time at Regina’s place
Now.

“Then it’s understandable.”

Emma nodded. “I hope you find that, too.” She knew all Mulan wanted was some place to fit in and it seemed like every time she thought she found that place, something happened. She knew all too well what it was like. “And, just so you know, we are.”

Mulan’s face scrunches up. “We are what?”

“You and me. We are friends.”

Mulan lets loose a quiet breath and Emma smiled a little more. They turned back to the computer. Emma tried to show Mulan some basic things while also searching up apartments. It would probably take a lot more computer lessons before Mulan was ready to do a search on her own, though. They saw a few nice places Mulan would be able to afford on her new deputy salary.

“Maybe we should work on finding Marian a job, too. In case… you know, in case she decides to join you,” Emma said.

“I’ll talk to her about it. I’m sure it would make it easier for her… situation.”

Emma held in a laugh, as that was a Regina-ism if ever she heard one. “It damn sure would.”

“Then, I’ll make sure to do talk to her as soon as possible.”

-8-8-8-8-

Emma marched into the diner and made a beeline for the counter. She grabbed Ruby by her elbow, dragging her to the back. Ruby yelped, but did not resist. Emma glared at her friend.

“You told Regina she has a glow?” Emma demanded.

Ruby shrugged. “She does.”

“Do you want her to kill you? This thing is supposed to be a secret. She’s gonna think I told you!” Emma hissed. She refused to even think about what Regina would do to her if Regina even thought Emma betrayed her.

With a scoff, Ruby threw her head to the side. “No, she won’t. If she got what I meant, she’ll know it’s the werewolf in me. You’re worrying too much. Even if she did think you told me, you act like she’s going to fireball you. We both know that’s not true.”

“Ruby, I don’t know why you think just because we’re friends, she’d think twice about killing me if I betrayed her trust.”

Ruby blew out a breath. “Friends, yeah, right. That’s not what the kids are calling it these days. Did she or did she not forgive you for the whole Marian thing?”

“Because we were supposed to be searching for her Happy Ending after that.”

“Yeah, and you guys are really searching up a storm there.”

Emma folded her arms across her chest. “Well, life got in the way.”

“Yeah, let’s say that happened. Look, people are going to find out eventually, right? But, the point is,
even if you told, which we both know you wouldn’t, Regina would forgive you. Look, I just said she had a glow because she does. She looks beautiful.”

Emma smiled. “Doesn’t she? Her hair is all shiny and her face has this little flush to it all the time.” She doubted she would ever see anything more beautiful than pregnant Regina.

“Oh, you’ve got it so bad, Swan.”

“Shut up.” Emma gave her friend a playful shove. “Sorry I freaked out on you.”

“It’s cool. I shouldn’t have said that in front of everyone. I know how bad the rumor mill can be around this place. I just… I really think she has a glow and I think it’s because of more than the pregnancy.” Ruby stared Emma down as she spoke.

Emma shook her head. “You’re reading too much into it.”

“Yet I feel like I’m reading just the right amount into it where Ruby isn’t working yet again because the sheriff seems to think Ruby’s job is actually a suggestion,” Granny remarked, stepping out of the freezer.

Ruby yelped. “Going back right now!” She rushed off.

“And the kid is right. Regina does have a glow,” Granny said as she stepped by Emma. “And she’s beautiful and she’d let you get away with murder at this point. Don’t blow it.” With that said, she went to work.

Emma could not even argue, mostly because she was standing there alone. She was not sure why Ruby and apparently Granny thought there was something more to her relationship with Regina than friendship. Well, and her one sided crush anyway. The only reason Regina was okay with her now, okay with being close to her, was because the pregnancy. Regina was still on edge about being pregnant. That was all… right?

Sighing, Emma shook her head and stepped back out. She might as well get lunch while she was at it. Maybe if she showed up with red meat, Regina would not bite her head off when she brought up the fact that she spoke to Ruby.

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“So, you’ve volunteered my services to a woman who hates me and Ruby knows. Sounds like you had a productive morning,” Regina said as she smothered her steak salad in barbecue sauce. Emma could only wonder if the craving for barbecue sauce would stick with Regina after the baby came or if she would never want to see the stuff again.

“Yeah, but Mulan doesn’t hate you and I know you don’t mind helping, either her or Marian.” Emma bit into her own lunch, a simple grilled cheese.

Regina sniffed. “Be that as it may, what about Ruby? Has she gone off and told the entire town yet?”

Emma rolled her eyes. “Ruby’s known for a while and she hasn’t said anything. She wasn’t trying to be mean to you. I think you just caught her by surprise with the whole glow and everything.”

“Damn her wolf senses. Wait, does this mean I only just acquired a glow?”

Emma shrugged. “You should ask Ruby that. You’ve been glowing to me the whole time.”
Regina smiled. “You think you’re charming.”

“No, I know I am. Says so in the name I don’t have. Oh, my dad is fine with us leaving for the weekend. He seems to think they can handle it if anything comes up.”

“Did you tell him why we’re going out of town?” Regina asked.

“Just that we need some family bonding time.”

Regina nodded, like she approved of the excuse. “Family bonding.”

It did not sound weird until Regina repeated it back to her. A hot blush invaded Emma’s face. She stammered, wanting to clean it up, but she was not sure how.

“We should show Henry special care while we have the chance. While I know he seems eager, he might feel neglected once it’s time to share,” Regina said, as if none of this was awkward or weird at all, beyond the fact that she could not mention the pregnancy in any way, shape, or form anyway.

Emma nodded. “Wanna surprise him with some stuff?” Henry deserved a few gifts for being such a trooper.

“You know, we could always go to Boston. He would love that. Unless you did it that year…”

Emma perked up, a shot of delighted energy going through her. “No, I didn’t. I didn’t need to because Boston was just another city to me then. Now, it has meaning. I would love to show him and you around. Plus, you’ll be able to find, like, chic places to buy your maternity clothes.”

“Nice. A tour and couture.”

“Yeah. There’s so much to see. You’ll love it.” Emma grinned and sat up tall. Regina smiled at her and she felt like everything was right in her world.

-8-8-8-8-

Boston was just as Emma remembered it, except she had not stayed in a five star hotel downtown right on the water when she lived there. Henry was very interested in seeing her old haunts while Regina wanted to get her shopping out of the way. Emma was not comfortable with letting Regina wander the city alone.

“It’s fine. This is not my first time in a big city,” Regina assured her as Emma moved their bags around the room for no reason other than needing to do something.

“No? Where else have you been?” Emma asked.

Henry poked his head in from the room next door. “Yeah, where else?” Regina had booked two rooms. Henry got the one with the queen-sized bed while she and Emma would share the room with the double beds. No one batted an eye to the arrangement when they checked in, not even Henry.

Regina’s face scrunched up a little. “Not many places, but several cities in Maine, just to get familiar with the state. I did a few road trips on my own to help get a feel for driving my car when I first arrived here. While I had the knowledge, I was still uncomfortable behind the wheel. Then, as I saw different places on television, I drove to them.”

“You been to Boston before?” Emma asked.

“Once or twice, not for very long.” Regina glanced at Henry. Had Regina taken Henry to Boston?
He never said and Regina pressed on through her explanation. “If it’s drivable on the east coast, I have been there. I’ve also taken the train a couple of times to get a feel for that, so I’ve been down to Washington DC. I didn’t stay anywhere for too long.”

Henry nodded. “Maybe… maybe we could take more trips… together.”

Regina smiled. “I would like that. Now, with that said, I will be fine on my own. We can meet back here in a few hours and go somewhere for dinner. All right?”

Emma sighed. “Fine, but only because I want the kid to see a few places I know you’d have no interest in. If anything happens, call us.”

“The same.”

And so they parted ways. The first place Henry wanted to see was Emma’s old job, which Emma had no problem with. It was a little hole in the wall place, but Henry seemed quite impressed. She took him inside, introduced him to her old boss, and from Henry’s expression, people might have thought she gave him the world on a silver platter.

“It’s cool he didn’t even think it was weird you had a son,” Henry said as they left the place.

“He knows I was really private when I worked for him. So, now what?” Emma asked.

Henry had plenty of places he wanted to check out and Emma took the time to show him all of them. She also took him to a little comic shop she knew about. She ended up buying him over a hundred dollars worth of comics.

“The graphic novels are for the baby, so I have something to read to the kidlet,” Henry explained, hugging his bag to his chest.

Emma grinned, happy he decided to call the baby by the same nickname. “That’s good.” She checked her phone. “It’s time to go meet up with your mom. What kind of dinner do you want? I know a bunch of spots and you know your mom will be okay with anything as long as she can slather a steak in barbecue sauce.”

Henry laughed, but Emma was totally right about that. “You think Mom would want to check out a Celtics game while we’re here?”

“I think you should be more worried on if we can get Celtics tickets on such short notice.”

“Come on, we both know you know a guy.”

Emma laughed. “What makes you think I know a guy?”

Henry shrugged. “You’re the type. I mean, you’d have to be the type considering everything that goes into finding people and stuff. I bet you know a guy who could help you find Atlantis or something.”

“I don’t know if I should be insulted by that or not, but I totally know a guy. Well, hopefully Milo is still around. I’ll talk to your mom and see what she says.” Emma knew Regina would be fine with it and she would love to take Henry to any live sporting event. Maybe she would get a chance to do that with Henry and with the kidlet in a few years. “You know we could make a thing out of this, if your mom is okay with it. Like every year go to Boston and catch a Celts game or something like that.”
“That would be cool.”

“Even with the kidlet?”

Henry’s brow furrowed. “Why wouldn’t it be okay? It’s not like we can leave the baby behind and he’ll probably like this as much as I do.”

“So… you’re cool with it?”

“Yes.” He gave her a look like she was crazy for thinking otherwise. She decided to let it go.

They went back to the hotel room, which Regina had filled with bags. Emma frowned at the sight. Henry did the same. *If this woman carried all this by herself…* Emma could not even finish the thought.

“Mom, if we knew you were gonna buy so much, we’d have gone with you. How’d you carry all this?” Henry asked.

Emma pointed to him. “Yeah, everything he said.”

Regina waved them off. “Nothing is heavy. It’s not even a lot. It just seems that way as I went to several different boutiques and there are many different bags. I promise you, none of it was heavy and this was several different trips back and forth. It was not heavy.”

Emma folded her arms across her chest. “I’ll be the judge of that when I’m taking it all down to the car.”

Regina just gave her a look, but Emma felt like the bags were probably heavier than Regina let on. She decided to let it go, though. No sense in having an argument during their vacation, especially since the deed was done. So, instead, they let Henry pick dinner and Emma took them to a restaurant she knew. There, they pitched the idea of the Celtics game and Regina had no problem with it. After dinner, they walked around the city a little, enjoying the sights of downtown, and then returned to their hotel rooms. Henry went to read his comics, leaving his mothers alone.

“So, what kind of clothes did you buy?” Emma asked.

Regina shrugged. “My usual style, but more accommodating for my situation.”

“Did you enjoy the day?”

“Very much so.”

“Henry and I were hoping we could do something like this at least once a year, you know, have a family vacation or something.”

Regina nodded. “That sounds fine.”

Emma smiled, happy Regina was going along with things. Of course, it could easily be pregnancy hormones and then tomorrow when she came to her senses everything would be different. *They would wait and see. I could get used to these kinds of mood swings, though.* A pleasant, agreeable Regina was a sight to behold and cherish. Somehow, they found themselves on the couch with Emma rubbing Regina’s calves and feet, as usual. There were no complaints.

The night was normal and they went to sleep, which surprisingly was when things took a turn for not normal. Emma always suffered nightmares and she was not surprised by one popping up after
visiting a bunch of places from her past, even if those places were actually good. No, she was surprised to wake up in the middle of a nightmare to find Regina sitting next to her, stroking her head, and softly humming. A few times at the mansion, Emma woke up in the same position, but it all seemed so blurry she thought she dreamed it, but she knew she was not dreaming now.

There were times when she stayed at Regina’s house when she swore she could sense Regina when she was distressed in her sleep. Sometimes, she even got up to go check on Regina. The first time she did it, she went all the way to Regina’s bedroom, opened the door, just to find Regina tossing and turning on her bed from nightmares. The second time, she hesitated because it hit her how odd it was that she could tell Regina was distressed, but then she pressed on. She woke Regina up whenever she could from the terrible dreams and then returned to her room. She liked Regina’s method more, though, but she was not sure if Regina would be open to Emma sitting on her bed and caressing her hair.

“It’s all right. I’m here,” Regina whispered and she kissed the side of Emma’s head. Emma’s eyes drifted shut and she was back to sleep. It was a great night’s sleep, just like always when she thought Regina calmed her nightmares.

The next day, the Swan-Mills family caught an early Celtics game. There, Regina had her first chili dog. Emma could hear her happy moans over the roar of the game and Emma was not sure how she would survive the rest of the trip. But, she was overjoyed Henry and Regina had a good time. It was a good family outing. My family.

-8-8-8-8-

Next time: Emma and Regina’s relationship takes a turn.

Chapter End Notes

My Facebook page isn't working at the moment, so the only way to get in touch with me would be here and FFN. I'll try to go work this out. Thank you for you time.
10: Red, White, and Yellow

The trip to Boston was awesome. Emma had a good time showing Henry and Regina around. Henry was all smiles the whole time and, for once, Regina’s quiet did not seem like she was brooding. And, they managed to pick up some things for the baby at Henry’s urging, beyond comic books.

On top of that, all of the bags Regina had purchased were not heavy, just like she said, so it was nice to know she had not lied to them. She had gone a little overboard, though. Underneath a bunch of maternity clothes, Emma found a blanket with ducklings on them. She did not say anything, but it made her smile.

“We should start buying things we’ll need. I mean, you let Grams have whatever baby stuff of mine you kept and we don’t have much time, right?” Henry said in the backseat, but leaning so far forward he might as well had been in the front seats with his mothers. They were on their way home after stopping at a couple of baby boutiques.

“Maybe Regina wants a baby shower for all that,” Emma said. She doubted that, but it was possible.

“I most certainly do not and do not let your mother plan one for me once my condition becomes obvious,” Regina huffed, folding her arms across her chest.

“Like I could stop her if she got that idea in her head, which she probably will now that you mention it,” Emma replied. She had not considered that, but a baby shower was in the cards. Her mother would make sure that happened. Plus, her mother would probably bother Regina about things she did not want to talk about. *I’ll have to catch Mom as soon as she finds out.*

“Why don’t you want a shower, Mom? You missed out on one with me, but you could get one now and have other people buy a bunch of stuff,” Henry pointed out.

Regina shook her head. “First off, I think we all know other people wouldn’t buy me a bunch of anything, except maybe rope.”

“Regina, don’t talk like that. You know that’s a minority of the town now. You’re all right with them, especially since they know you didn’t cast the Second Curse. I’m sure plenty of people would show up to a baby shower. And we’re all going to find out because Snow White is going to see to that,” Emma said. She wanted to get it in Regina’s head now that she would not be able to stop her mother when she decided it was time to celebrate Regina’s second child.

Regina pointed to Emma. “No, you will stop your mother. You tell her I will destroy her happiness if she does.”

“Yeah, I don’t think that will work,” Emma said. *Why does everyone think I have them magic touch with everyone else? I’m barely staying above water myself.*
Henry giggled. “Especially since Grams’ happiness will probably depend on throwing a baby shower or not.”

Emma arched an eyebrow. “Why’d you laugh?” Was Henry picturing her getting killed by Regina when she failed to stop the shower? *Nah, he wouldn’t do that.*

“I thought of Mom looking like Yzma when they threw her the birthday party in the restaurant.”

Emma guffawed. “You would totally be Yzma!”

Regina folded her arms across her chest and sniffed. “I have much more class than Yzma.”

“Do you? Yzma is, like, the classiest Disney villain because of Eartha Kitt,” Emma argued.

“I can’t believe we’re even having this ridiculous conversation,” Regina huffed.

“You’ve met Yzma before, haven’t you?” Henry asked.

“Of course, because all Disney villains know each other.” It was hard to tell if that was sarcasm.

“So, House of Villains is, like, based on a true story?” Henry asked.

“Are you two doing this on purpose?” Regina inquired, the vein in her forehead starting to make an appearance.

Emma and Henry laughed, but Emma waved Henry off to get him to stop. Eventually, they would have to get around to buying things for the baby, even if Regina still wanted act like the baby was some abstract concept instead of steadily growing in her womb. They made it home safe and sound, even though Regina did look close to homicidal.

Henry was rushed to bed. It was technically a school night, being Sunday and all. It was not too late, but the weekend had been very exciting and he was worn out. He was knocked out before ten for the first time since Emma had met him. Then, it was just her and Regina.

“Thank you for this,” Regina said. They were on the couch and Regina had her feet in Emma’s lap. Emma busied her hands with one of Regina’s dainty feet.


“No, silly. The trip. Henry definitely needed this.”

“Just Henry?”

Regina scowled a little. “Stop fishing for compliments. It’s unbecoming.”

Emma chuckled. “I don’t have to fish. But, you had a good time, right?”

“I did. I’ve never actually left Storybook and just had a good time. There was always a reason behind it and, yes, there was a reason here, but it was something light that could be easily taken care of. Even if the reason wasn’t too serious, like getting comfortable with my car or familiar with this land, I was always on edge when I left and could never truly enjoy myself. Hell, even my first and second time in Boston to pick up Henry left me on edge. This was different. There was no reason to be on edge. So, again, thank you.”

Emma sat up a little taller. “No problem. So, you adopted Henry in Boston?”
“Yes. Of course, now knowing you a little better, I can only wonder how he ended up there.”

Emma shook her head. “Hell if I know since I definitely gave birth in Arizona. I guess it doesn’t really matter. Why’d you go back a second time?”

Regina glanced away. “Henry was… I just didn’t I could properly care for him.”

Emma’s eyes went wide. “You were going to return Henry?”

“In a moment of horror and self-doubt, yes, I was. But, I couldn’t. Even though it scared the hell out of me to take care of this tiny human being, I couldn’t part with him. He was in my heart and he was mine. He will always be in my heart and mine.”

Emma nodded, knowing that was not a dig at her. “I’m glad. Maybe we can do another trip before the baby comes.” If Henry can work his way into Regina’s heart, then surely this baby can do the same. Maybe she just needs to see him, hold him, and have him there.

“I suppose. We’ll see. It’s been very quiet around here for a couple of months. Who knows how long that’ll keep.”

Emma shrugged as she could without releasing Regina’s foot. “Well, they should learn to get along without us every now and then. We can’t take care of every little problem. Besides, when the tadpole comes, they won’t be able to depend on both of us showing up. One of us will have to stay behind with the kidlet, right?”

Regina was silent. Emma let it go and just focused on the foot rub. She would just keep mentioning the baby in some way to help Regina understand there was a baby there. Soon, there would be a baby here. They needed to be ready.

“I should go to bed. We did a lot of walking,” Regina said.

Emma did not dispute that. They had done a lot of walking. There was a lot to see and only two days to cover it. So, Emma just eased Regina’s foot from her lap.

“Goodnight,” Emma said.

“You’ll stay?” Regina asked.

“Yeah. By now my folks are in bed and I don’t want to risk waking them up… or worse,” Emma replied.

Regina nodded, kissed Emma’s cheek, and they parted ways. Emma did not dwell on the kiss. After all, it was far from the first time Regina kissed her cheek. Why the hell does she keep doing that, though? Baby hormones?

Emma hung out with the television for a little while. It tickled Emma that Regina had cable. Emma liked to do all of her viewing online these days and she thought most people did, but Regina was all about her cable and DVR viewing. One day, Emma would have to remember to hook her laptop up to the TV, just to see Regina’s reaction.

After a movie, Emma decided it was time for bed. She showered and everything, making her way to what had to be her room now. Her clothes were in the closet and the dresser drawers. Regina went out and got new pillows for her after she complained about how hard the original pillows were. Henry put up pictures of them in the room. It was slightly messy with clothes on the floor and Emma did not believe in making her bed, but Regina never commented on it.
Emma sighed as she sank into bed and drifted off to sleep. In the middle of the night, Emma was jolted awake. Sweat dotted her forehead and her heart was racing. Regina! Emma shot out of bed and hurried to Regina’s bedroom. She eased the door open, not wanting to wake Regina up if she was still sleeping.

It was far from the first time Emma had been pulled from her sleep by Regina’s nightmares. They had some kind of connection, which Regina tried to assure her was from mixing their magic so often and nothing deeper than that. Sometimes, her nightmares woke Regina. Looking in on Regina now, though, it did not look like she was having a nightmare.

Regina’s face was tense, but she was not shaking or whimpering like she usually did with a nightmare. Emma watched for a moment longer, but could not see why Regina might have sent out a distress signal. Shaking her head, Emma shut the door quietly.

“Maybe I had a nightmare and just got confused,” Emma said. Of course, that did not make any sense. If she had a nightmare, Regina would have been by her side.

Emma went back to her room and slept through the night. In the morning, Regina did not mention a nightmare. They all went about their day like normal.

Hook wandered into the sheriff’s station for some reason with his usual expression of smug entitlement. Emma was not in the mood to deal with him, not after having such a good weekend and a decent week so far. She refused to let him ruin it.

“Nope,” Emma said as she jumped up from her desk.

“But, love—” Hook tried to say.

“Nope! I told you before I’d shoot you and I just might,” Emma said.

“Is there a problem?” Mulan inquired as she stepped out from the backroom. She was trying to familiarize herself with all of their equipment. Her sword was on her hip, as was her gun and her deputy badge was attached to her belt.

Hook smirked. “No problem, mate. Just here to talk to Swan is all.”

“It doesn’t sound like she wants to talk to you,” Mulan stated, her voice harder than Emma was used to. She put her hand on her sword’s hilt.

“I got this, Mulan.” Emma waved her deputy off, but Mulan did not leave. Emma focused on Hook. “I don’t understand why the hell you keep bugging me, but we’re done, over, through. I don’t want anything else to do with you and I don’t know why you won’t get that through your fucking skull. If you want me to put you in jail for harassment, that’s doable.”

“Come on, love—” Hook said and Emma screamed.

“Stop calling me that! I don’t love you! I never loved you. I thought that was obvious when your stupid True Love’s Kiss didn’t work in New York. I’ve so over you, you might as well be a pimple I popped. How stupid are you to keep bothering me with this?” Emma demanded.

“Because we belong together. You’ve let the Queen poison your mind, but I can easily remind you.” Hook had the nerve to reach for her and Emma grabbed his wrist. She twisted and next thing Hook knew he was on his knees. Worse was Mulan had her sword to his throat. They both glared down at
“You don’t fucking touch me and you don’t talk about Regina,” Emma growled at him.

“I think time in the cell might do him well,” Mulan said.

Emma nodded. “I concur.”

They shoved Hook into the cell. Mulan stood there for a moment, glaring at him. Emma was not sure if Mulan was seeing Hook or someone else, but it was probably a good idea to get Mulan back to work.

“Good work, deputy. Thanks for having my back.” Emma patted Mulan on the shoulder, wanting to distract her from Hook.

Mulan turned to her and smiled a little. “Of course. That is what we do.”

“Yes, it is.”

They went back to what they were doing while Hook ranted the day away, growling about how Regina had taken Emma from him and how he would win her back. Emma sighed. What the hell did I see in him? There were so many answers, none of them good. Escape. She had been exhausted by him. He seemed to accept her for who she was, but that had been a pretty lie. I just repeat a pattern when it comes to relationships. I’m such an idiot. Suddenly, she did not want to share space with him.

“Mulan, I’m taking lunch! David should be back in ten minutes. You okay here by yourself?” Emma called.

Mulan returned to the main room. “I will be fine.”

Emma had no doubt that was true and was gone. She went to the diner and picked up some food. Ruby, of course, made fun of her, but she just took it in stride. Right now, all she wanted to do was see Regina.

“Will you be safe delivering that?” Ruby joked.

“There’s barbecue sauce, so I should be fine.”

“If not, I have an awesome speech planned out for your funeral. I make a lot of meat puns.”

“I always knew I’d die from a lack of hamburgers,” Emma remarked. Ruby laughed and Emma felt a little better. Despite poor life choices, she managed to come out ahead with good friends and good family. Hook was just a mistake in her past and she was moving beyond him.

Emma wanted to surprise Regina with lunch, even though she knew Regina would be disappointed as there was no red meat. She just wanted to spend a little bit of her day with Regina now, relax and enjoy life. But, Regina surprised her by not being in her office. She called to find out if Regina had meeting she did not know about, but Regina did not answer.

“Hey, where’s the mayor?” Emma asked, looking down at Regina’s minion of an assistant sitting at her desk.

“I believe she said she needed some fresh air,” Pearl replied. It used to be, Regina’s assistant would look at her as if she were not worth the time of day, but now she acted like Emma was someone she
needed to cater to.

“But where?” Emma pressed. The last thing she needed was for someone to attack Regina while she was alone. She had not seen Regina do anything magical since she found out about the pregnancy, so she was not sure if carrying the baby was doing something to Regina’s magic, but for all she knew Regina was defenseless out in the land of crazies. Good thing Hook’s ass is in jail right now.

But, there were others, people she did not even know about, who could try something stupid.

“She didn’t say. She just said hold her calls for about an hour and she needed fresh air. Did you have a lunch appointment with her?”

“Don’t I always?”

Pearl sunk in her seat a little, a blush painting her cheeks. “Ah, yes. I’m sorry. She didn’t leave any details, didn’t mention what I should say to you when you turned up.”

Emma growled and rushed out of Town Hall. She jumped into her cruiser and was about to just drive around town, but decided to check the house first. If Regina was not there, then screw it, she would do a locator spell, even if she still did not understand a lot of the most basic magic. She was always good in a pinch.

But, Regina’s car was in the driveway, so she was probably home. Emma entered the house and was about to call for Regina, but held off. There was something weird. She could hear little something. It was faint. She decided to be quiet in case something was wrong and Regina needed help.

Slowly, she ascended the stairs and crept through the hall. The noise grew louder and came from the end of the hall—Regina’s room. She almost swallowed her tongue when she discovered the source of the noise. Regina was on her bed, baby bump and all on full display. She had one hand in between her creamy thighs and the other pulled at a nipple. Apparently, someone’s sex drive returned full force.

Emma knew she should back away, act like she was never there, but she was rooted to the spot. Her eyes refused to blink, lest she dare miss any of this. And then, Regina looked up. Regina gasped.

“Emma!” Regina moved to cover herself.

Emma winced. “Uh… sorry.”

Regina fumbled with the sheet as she tugged it over her torso. “Wha-what are you doing home?”

“Uh… I wanted to have lunch and you weren’t there, so I came to check here. I’m sorry. I’ll… uh… go…” She pointed behind her, but she still could not look away. Regina was so perfect and she really just wanted to join her.

“Wait!” Regina blurted out.

Emma’s mouth moved before words came out. “Wha-what?” She still could not look away.

“I know I’ve asked a lot of you, but…” Regina looked away.

“But?”

“I’ve been… for almost twenty minutes… and nothing.” Regina sounded close to tears.

Emma’s brain felt like it completely shut down. Does not compute! No, she was pretty sure she just
had the blue screen of death in her mind at that point. Regina could not be asking what it seemed like she was asking.

Regina’s eyes fell, gaze now on the mattress. “That was inappropriate. I’m sorry.”

_Whoa, wait, did I just miss the boat?_ “It wasn’t!” Emma practically screamed. “It was far from inappropriate. I mean, if you… uh… still want my help and all.”

“No, just get comfortable. This is about you.”

“Emma,” Regina groaned, fingers moving swiftly.
Emma decided not to finish undressing and to just get in there before Regina did not need her anymore. She would regret missing such a wonderful opportunity for the rest of her life if Regina finished herself off. Emma kneeled down onto the bed and went right in with her mouth.

Regina arched into her as soon as her lips touched her sleek flesh. “Emma!” Regina’s hand got lost in Emma’s hair, pulling her closer.

Emma groaned into Regina’s sweet skin, delighting in Regina’s taste. She wanted to make it last, but she did not want to torture Regina. She went straight for Regina’s clit, sucking it into her mouth and ravishing it with her tongue. Regina writhed and wiggle, moaning like Emma’s mouth was the best thing ever. And she released a loud cry and her flavor flooded Emma’s tongue.

“Yes,” Regina sighed as she melted into the bed.

Emma kissed Regina’s thigh. “You’re good now?” She hoped Regina wanted to go again, hoped that was just to take the edge off. It was over too fast and she needed so much more. *I think I need her forever.*

Regina purred, actually purred. A lazy smile spread across her face and she closed her eyes contently. “Yes. I needed that.”

“You haven’t been sneaking in here and doing this or anything, have you?” Oh, those thoughts would play in Emma’s imagination, true or not.

Regina shook her head. “No, this was the first time. I’ve never felt such a powerful need for it.”

“So, you’re one of those people who’s sex drive just goes away in the first trimester,” Emma commented as Regina moved over, like she was making space for Emma. Not being an idiot, despite what Regina thought, Emma decided to take the silent offer.

“I never had much of one in general,” Regina admitted.


“Yes, I know, I was the Evil Queen and there was Evil Cleavage and extremely tight leather pants, but sex was a weapon for me, like a knife. I don’t need a knife beyond the purpose it serves to get a job done.”

Emma’s brow furrowed. “So, you never had, like, fun sex?”

Regina stared off to the front of the room for a long moment. “I don’t even know what that means.”

Emma felt a little sad for Regina. *How is this even possible?* “I don’t know if I really get it. I mean, when you had sex with someone… why would you do it?”

Regina sighed. “This is the pillow talk you want to have?”

“You started it. I don’t understand how you didn’t have much of a sex drive. I mean, you’re not asexual or anything.”

“No, I’m not. There’s a long story there that I doubt you want to hear. Just know that whenever I had sex, there was a reason behind it that had very little do with the fact that I wanted to have ‘adult fun.’ Sometimes, it was just to torture people.”

Emma shook her head and stared at Regina. “I don’t see how that could be torture.” *I’d do it every
Regina’s eyes glistened again and shook her head. “Trust me, it could be. Other times, it was just to lord over people, to remind them who was in charge, who had the power.” She gasped and her eyes went wide with horror. “I didn’t… I didn’t just do that with you, did I?”

Emma took Regina’s hand without thinking. “No, you didn’t. You asked me and I jumped right in. It was fine.”

Regina nodded and a tear welled up in the corner of her eye. “I never want to use you like that. I never want to hurt you, so are you sure?”

“It was totally fine and I’m totally fine. In fact, if you ever need a hand… or tongue or lips again, feel free to ask me. That’s what I’m here for.” Mentally, Emma slapped the shit out of herself. **Seriously? What the fuck is wrong with me?!!**

Regina’s face went blank for a moment and then a frown settled on her face, like she disliked the idea. “Of course. We should get back to work. I should shower.” Her voice was like stone.

Emma nodded. **Did I just fuck this up for myself? Fuck.** She needed to be careful, regroup. “And I should get back. Don’t want my dad to look for me. And I’ve got Hook locked up.”

Regina arched an eyebrow. “Hook locked up?”

“He came to the station to bother me and shit went down. It’s fine.”

“Are you sure?”

“It’s fine.” **Nothing’s fine.** Of course, nothing was ever fine. Regina studied her face, but did not ask a follow up question.

And just like that, they were apart. Regina was in the bathroom and Emma slapped herself in the forehead half a dozen times. **That’s what I’m here for? Geez, I am an idiot!** Emma could not shake that thought and grabbed her gear, putting it on as she exited the house. She did not want to make any more of a fool out of herself. Hopefully by dinner, the thing would have blown over and everything could go back to normal. **Yeah, that’s why I feel like I’m doing the fucking walk of shame right now, right? Stupid.**

Without thinking, she went to Granny’s, needing a bear claw. As soon as she was through the door, Ruby’s head went up. She damn near ran over to Emma and pulled her into the back. Emma was not sure what the hurry was. She also was not sure why Ruby look almost stricken when she finally let Emma go.

“What the hell is wrong with you?” Ruby gaped at her.

Emma’s face twisted, complete with pursed lips and squinted eyes. “Nothing to my knowledge?” It came out as a question because maybe Ruby knew something she did not. **Oh, please, you know there’s plenty wrong with you. Tons of shit and a bunch of it hit the fan today.**


Emma palmed her face. “Aw, geez.”

“Aw, geez is right! First off, rude. You take a shower before you come in here after doing that. Second off, the hell? Now, you’re not just her errand girl, but also her sex slave?” Ruby asked.
“It wasn’t like that!”

“Then, what the hell?”

“She was frustrated and couldn’t… you know, come. So I… helped.” Could I sound any more like a sex toy?

Ruby’s face fell into a deadpan. “You helped?”

“I even said I was there to help.”

Ruby closed her eyes and pinched the bride of her nose. “You did not say that.”

“I said that.”

Ruby threw her hands up and looked like she wanted to hit Emma. “Are you suffering from brain damage? I always thought Regina was the one who took too many head injuries, but here you are saying shit like that to this woman you have feelings for and who has feelings for you.”

Emma sucked her teeth. “Now, who’s talking shit?”

Ruby sighed and rubbed her temples. “You both are sad cases. You’re the sheriff. You should be able to put this crap together, Sherlock.”

“Put what together?”

Ruby shook her head. “Never mind that. You need to apologize. Like, seriously, I’m sorry, I didn’t mean that and you tell her how you feel. You go buy flowers, take her hot cocoa, and whatever she thinks is the best cut of red meat.”

“I can’t tell her how I feel! It’ll mess up everything,” Emma said.

“By everything you mean this little game of make believe you have going on? You’re playing house right now, Emma. You’re in way too deep. You need to come clean.”

Emma shook her head. “I can’t do that.”

“Not only can you do that, you will do that. Do you really want her to go around thinking having sex with her was some kind of service? It makes her sound like a burden and you sound almost like a whore,” Ruby pointed out.

Emma winced. “It did sound service-y, didn’t it?” That was putting it nicely.

“Emma, this can’t go on. You’re going crazy and everyone already thinks you’re together anyway. You live with the woman for gods’ sake.”

“I don’t live with her. I’m… in between houses.” Emma slapped her forehead. I must be stupid. How am I even still alive? I should’ve gotten a Darwin award a long time ago. “I sound homeless.”

Ruby took a deep breath and probably reminded herself that to be patient with Emma. “Look at it this way, when was the last time you slept at your parents’ place? And let me remind you, I’m best friends with your mother.”

Emma huffed and her shoulders slumped. “Fine. It’s been a while.”

“It’s time to put on your big girl panties and woman up. This is the real world, right? Then get real.”
Emma narrowed her gaze. “Please tell me you didn’t do that on purpose.”

“I did not. Taking out the Real World reference, this isn’t some movie.”

“I know, which is why I shouldn’t say anything! There’s no fairy tale happy ending here. It’s just me messing everything up. Regina already has enough on her plate. Do you know she still can’t even say the word pregnant? She can barely say the word baby. She only uses it when it’s the only possibly word for the sentence she’s saying to make sense. She doesn’t even say either words when we go to appointments.”

Ruby stared at her, studied her. “You go with her doctor’s appointments?”

“She asked me to. She’s scared and she wants someone to be there.”

“And that someone is you. Doesn’t that mean anything to you?”

“Well, who else would she ask? She doesn’t have a lot of options. It’s not like she could take Henry.”

Ruby growled. “I really can’t stand you right now, Emma. Too many excuses. Look, you go buy those flowers and you come back here, I’m going to have Granny prepare something special for you, and you go talk to Regina as soon as possible.”

Emma had a feeling she would not be able to get out of this one. Ruby was too intent. So, she left to do as ordered. By the time she came back with flowers in her hand, she did not even have a chance to go back into the diner. Ruby met her at the door, shoved a bag in her hand, and turned her back toward her car. So, just like that, Emma was now on the way to see Regina.

When she pulled up to Town Hall, Emma sighed and sat in the car for a long time. Her heart pounded in her chest and she was not sure how her stomach managed to make itself one large knot. Her throat burned, threatening vomit at any moment. I’ll have fits. The Regina-ism should have made her smile, but she felt like she might burst into tears. She was not sure what she would say to Regina. She felt like it would be emotional suicide to admit her feelings for Regina. She was not even totally sure about her feelings. Liar. A tap on her window caused her to look up.

“Regina!” Emma squeaked.

“My assistant pointed out that you’ve been sitting in the parking lot for twenty minutes. Obviously, there’s something on your mind, Miss Swan,” Regina commented.

Internally, Emma winced. Back to “Miss Swan.” That was far from good. Emma unlocked the passenger side door.

“Can you get in for a second?” Emma requested, grabbing the food and the flowers from the front seat.

Regina glanced around and frowned, but she got in. “This has to only be a second. I have a lot of work to do.”

“I know. I know. Look… I…” Emma sighed and held up the flowers. “I’m sorry.”

“For what? Helping me achieve an orgasm? You have nothing to be sorry for. You were only helping.” Regina sneered.

Emma’s heart sank into her chest. “No, see that’s the thing, it wasn’t just helping.”
Regina’s frown deepened. “Meaning what?”

“Look…” Emma trailed off and then remembered her gifts. She eased the flowers into Regina’s lap. “I’m not great with words. I thought the flowers might say it better.”

Regina looked down at the rose bouquet. There were red roses in the center surrounded by yellow roses and then separate from those a red and a white rose together. Emma sighed.

“I know roses are cliché and corny, but I didn’t want the message to get muddled,” Emma said.

“Emma, are you… do you… You have feelings for me?” Regina’s voice quivered and she swallowed loudly as soon as she finished speaking.

“Yes,” Emma answered quickly. She did not want to give herself a chance to backtrack. “Love.” She made a circle with her finger around the red roses. “Friendship and love.” She circled the yellow roses. “And united.” She pointed to the red and the white roses. She looked in Regina’s eyes. “We’re united… right?”

“Emma, I wouldn’t be able to make it through this without you. Of course we’re united.”

Emma swallowed hard, to the point it hurt her burning throat. “Do you… I mean, was I just scratching an itch for you?”

Regina took a deep breath and stared at the ceiling. “The reason for the itch… lately, I’ve been having dreams.”

“I read up on that. Your dreams get more vivid as the pregnancy progresses.”

Regina shook her head. “No, Emma. Erotic dreams. Starring you.”

Emma’s chest suddenly hurt more than she thought possible and she could not breathe. “Me?” she squeaked.

“Yes, you.”

Emma rubbed her forehead as she tried to process that new bit of information. Regina was having erotic dreams of her. Those dreams had left her frustrated and she wanted Emma’s touch. There was that blue screen of death again. It just did not compute.

“We both know there’s a connection between us,” Regina said.

“Because of our magic.”

Regina smiled and shook her head. “You are such an idiot.” She took Emma’s hand and squeezed. “Beyond magic. You have to admit we had a connection, even when we didn’t want it. There was something there between us.”

Emma blinked. “You mean you’ve had feelings for me?”

“At first, I tried to repress them. I did utterly loathe you for a long time. But, with each interaction, the feelings changed and grew.”

“But, you were so pissed at me when I brought back Marian.”

“Of course I was, but I never expected to stay angry and you see I didn’t. Do you honestly think I would have accepted help with my situation from anyone else? Would I have let anyone else know
of the incident? If your mother had shown up that first day to find me having fits, would I have allowed her to suggest I was… pregnant?” Regina inquired. She spat the word out, but she managed to say it. Good sign? Emma hoped so.

Emma sighed. “I guess I never thought about it.”

“No else could have done that, you know. Could you imagine if it was Robin?”

Emma shook her head. “I never thought it.”

“You were too worried I would reject you.”

“Well, what about you? You could’ve told me.”

“You were with the pirate, for some reason I try not to think about,” Regina replied.

Emma shook her head. “Let’s not even go there. I wasn’t thinking straight in all of the excitement. You see the second we had some down time I was able to realize I was just making the same crazy decisions I made before I came here. Is that why you were with Robin?”

Regina sighed and stared down at the floor briefly. “He was supposedly my soul mate. After being annoyed by him for a year, I guess I just wanted to see what made the pixie dust think he and I were made for each other. I was sorely disappointed.”

Emma chuckled a bit. “I won’t say I’m sorry.”

“Don’t be. I’m sorry I led you to believe I only wanted you around for help. Honestly, you’ve been the only thing keeping me going and keeping me together through this whole situation,” Regina replied. And they were back to Regina-isms. One step at a time.

Emma took Regina’s hand and gave it a little squeeze. “You’re not alone.”

Regina’s eyes shimmered as she smiled. “You were the first person in a long time to make me believe that.”

“Can I… Can I kiss you?”

Regina inhaled sharply, but answered quickly. “Yes.”

Emma almost thought she heard wrong and she was a little scared to follow through, just in case she did. But, she had come that far, so she leaned in. Regina met her halfway and, suddenly, but slowly their lips touched. It felt like electricity between them, but it also felt calming, soothing. Emma felt settled for possibly the first time in her life. And then, Regina pulled away.

“As wonderful as that was, I need to get back to work. It wouldn’t do for my assistant to come out here and find the mayor and the sheriff necking like two teenagers,” Regina pointed out.

“You’re right. Uh… can I get a rain check?” Emma needed more kissing in her life. This is way better than her little cheek kisses and forehead kisses… not that I want those to stop. It was settled, she needed more kissing in general.

“At home, when Henry’s distracted.”

Emma grinned and nodded. “Sounds good. Oh, I brought you some food. It’s a peace offering, but also to make sure you eat.”
“Thank you.” Regina smiled. “Thank you for taking care of us.”

“It’s my pleasure.” And that was totally the truth.

Regina leaned over and gave Emma a quick peck before taking the food and leaving the flowers. “You bring those home for me, please,” Regina requested.

Emma nodded and then Regina was gone. The whole thing was surreal, but felt so right. Damn it. *I’m going to have to get Ruby something without admitting she was right about this whole thing.*

Next time: Emma and Regina define their relationship.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: my Facebook page still isn’t working, so here and FFN are the only places to get in touch with me.
Partners in Crime

Chapter Notes

I don’t own these characters. Disney/ABC does.


11: Partners in Crime

After the talk in the car, Emma thought things would be a little awkward at home, but she was wrong. Once they were all home, it was like any other day. Henry had his homework done and they killed a little time playing video games. They teamed up to kick butt in a first person shooter while she asked him about his day. He rambled on about his club activities as they racked up some kills. Regina sat with them for a little while before going to make dinner and then they had dinner together. It was not until they had all gone to bed that things got a little weird.

Emma was awake, staring at the ceiling. Ever since she hit the mattress, all she could think about was Regina’s taste. It had all happened too fast. It was over too quickly. She had not had enough and now she did not know if she would ever get it again. No, no, no. She has feelings for me. This should be the beginning… right?

Before she could travel down the road of self-doubt and lose all hope, her door cracked open. “Emma,” Regina whispered.

“I’m up,” Emma replied. Her heart thumped hard in her chest.

Regina eased into the room and shut the door behind her. “Is this all right?”

Emma was not sure what “this” was, but she was happy to have Regina near her, so the answer was obvious. “Yeah.”

Regina came over to the bed and sat down. Emma moved over, wanting to make sure Regina had enough space. Regina took it as a signal to lie down, which Emma was totally fine with. Regina slid in close and Emma could not help moving until they were almost touching. Regina leaned into her and Emma held her breath.

“I was hoping we could talk and your room is further from Henry’s, so we won’t accidentally wake him,” Regina explained.

Emma nodded. “We need to talk already?” It was supposed to be a joke, but her voice cracked and her chest hurt.

“Not like that, but there is a lot to take in. We have to decide what this is and when we’ll tell Henry.”

“Well, I already told you how I feel, through flowers. I mean, I have serious feelings for you, Regina.” Emma was surprised at how easy it was to say.
Regina flinched, as if they had not discussed that exact issue in the car, like she not placed the bouquet of roses in a beautiful vase downstairs and stared at them for a full minute with hearts in her eyes. Emma wanted to pat herself on the back for it. But, it was Ruby’s idea, so she could only take so much credit for it. Still owe Ruby a thank you gift for that, even if this goes sideways.

“Just as you are not so good with words, sometimes they fail me at the best of times as well,” Regina said.

“Meaning?”

Regina took Emma’s hand and eased it underneath her nightgown. At first, Emma thought things has escalated quickly, but it turned out Regina put her hand on her enlarged stomach. Emma caressed the bump. There was a baby in there. It was obvious now and quite beautiful.

“I would like you to name the baby,” Regina said.

Emma blinked. How many times is this woman going to blue screen my brain? “You want me to… You want me to name the kidling?” Wow. That’s… wow. Her nerves jumped and her guts tied themselves into tight knots. She could not put a name to the feeling coursing through her: happiness, pride, excitement, and terror. Regina wanted her to name a person, a human, a kid, Regina’s kid. Our kid?

“Yes. You can find out the gender and come up with a name. I still don’t want to know, but you can find out,” Regina replied.

Emma eyed Regina carefully, studying her to make sure she had not lost her mind or if the pregnancy was just messing with Regina’s brain. “You really want me to name the kid?”

“Why not? I named Henry.”

“Yeah, but he was yours.”

“I know and so far, this one is as much yours as it is mine. Do you not want to name the baby?” Regina frowned a little, a cute wrinkle appearing in the middle of her brow.

Emma had to take a breath. “Are you kidding me? It would be an honor. I can’t believe you’re going to let me name the kid. Our kid.” Our kid!

“I thought this would be the best way to let you know how I feel.”

Emma could only nod. There were no words to describe what she felt. And all I did was get her some damn flowers. She’s letting me name the damn kid! She pretty much got me a whole damn kid. Emma’s mind raced and spun and whirled for longer than she thought possible. Regina gave her hand a gentle squeeze, which brought her back to Earth.

“I can name the kid whatever I want?” Emma asked, her voice quiet.

“Nothing outrageous, but yes, anything you want.”

“Damn it, Regina, you’re going to make me cry.” Emma caressed Regina’s stomach again. “So, anything else to talk about?”

“Well, what are we to each other? I assume we’re not in this just for the lust of it, as we have been dancing around whatever this for way too long, and we are going to have to tell Henry eventually, even though he assumes there’s something going on between us anyway,” Regina commented.
“Is that why he’s so chill whenever we’re close?”

“Well, is he wrong to think that whenever we’re close?”

Emma’s face fell. “Were we the last to know? I mean, even Ruby kinda pushed me to just come clean to you, like she knew you felt the same way.”

Regina arched an eyebrow. “So, the town is speculating on us?”

“Well, even Mulan thinks something’s up with us.”

Regina frowned. “That’s irksome.”

“Hook thinks you poisoned me against him.”

Regina scoffed. “I wish I had that power. I’d have used it a long time ago.”

“You probably would’ve had the power if we talked about this. Hell, if we talked about Hook. But, anyway. I know you hate having people in your business, but it’s a fact of life. Are we worth the annoyance?” Emma hoped so.

Regina ran her fingers up and down Emma’s arm. “You’re my family. Of course you’re worth it.”

Emma grinned and her spine straightened a bit. “You see me as family?”

“You’re the mother of my son, Emma. This already bonds us, but there’s so much more to us and we’ve been through so much together. I don’t think I’ve ever been this close to anyone, even Daniel.”

“Wow.” And Emma’s head was back to spinning. Regina was closer to her than her first love, arguably the reason for everything? How the hell can I mean that much to her? How the hell did I not know that? How the hell am I this fucking stupid?

“Yes. So, how would you define our relationship? What would you classify us as?”

Emma scratched her head. “It’s on me?”

“Well, I would need your input. I envision us as partners. I’m not sure how to do girlfriends in this realm’s sense of the term. I think I’ve been an awkward friend at best. I’m not sure how I would be as a girlfriend in the romantic sense.”

“I think you’d be fine, but I think partners cover us well. We’re beyond girlfriends, even though we haven’t been on a proper date. Unless you want to count sitting on the couch once Henry’s gone to bed or whenever we have lunch together. I want to take you out, though. We should get in at least a couple of dates before the baby comes.” Partner felt right. Like it defined everything they were already.

“That’s the other thing I want to talk to you about. Are you sure you want to do this, Emma?” Regina’s eyes searched her face. “Are you sure you want to see this whole thing through?”

Emma bent her eyebrows in close. “Why wouldn’t I? You already said I can name this kid. I’m going to be here for that and more. You’re not getting rid of me. I know a kid is a lot of work. Fourteen years ago, I knew I wasn’t ready, but now I am ready. I’m ready and I’m here. I’m staying, Regina. I’m staying. For you, for our kids, for our family.” Family. It felt good to say.

Regina moved in a little closer, so now their bodies touched. “That’s good. Do you have any
“Concerns? You sound like a survey. I think I just want to make sure this is what you want. You’re not doing this because I’ve been here while you’re going through your… situation, right?” Emma held in a wince. The word “situation” left a bad taste in her mouth, but she did not want to spook Regina right now.

Regina shifted onto her side, so she could look directly at Emma. “After all we’ve been through, you doubt me? You think so little of me?”

“Of course not. I know you would go to Hell and back for me, Regina. I just… I want to be sure. It’s not often people, you know, want me.” In fact, if she made a list, it would probably have about five names on it.

Regina placed her hand on Emma’s cheek. “I’ve wanted you ever since I lost you. It was easy to say the hole in my heart was Henry, but I know better. The hole in my heart was family.”

Emma smiled a little. “I’m starting to feel like Stitch.”

“You have seen a lot of Disney movies for someone who only started parenting three years ago.”

Emma chuckled. “One, I still have vague memories of the memories you gave me, which means I’m up to date on Disney movies. Two, Disney is not just for kids, okay? I’m all about escaping into a fantasy world for eighty minutes if it means I can forget that life sucks more often than not. Three, I’ve been a Disney kid since I was a kid for the eighty minute escape from reality, although doing that literally for the past few years is not as fun as I thought it would be as a kid.”

Internally, Emma winced as she realized those words could very easily sour the mood, not that they had much mood working. She disliked bringing up her childhood, very aware Regina blamed herself for everything now that the woman could feel guilt again. Regina’s thumb brushed softly across Emma’s cheek.

“I want to say if I could take it all back, I would,” Regina sighed.

“We both know you wouldn’t and more often than not, I wouldn’t want you to, anyway. I like the person I am and I know life made me this way. I’m nurture all the way and I like it. Are there times I’m an idiot? Yes. Are there times I’m more suspicious and paranoid than I should be? Yes. Do I have too many bad habits? Yeah, but I’m me and I like me.” *Most of the time, anyway.*

Regina smiled a little. “I like you as well, but you are not nurture all the way through. We both know you are your father’s child and you have your mother’s annoying hope thing going on for you.”

“Hope was one of the things that helped me survive, though, so it’s good I inherited that. Hope is also the thing that helped me do good things, even when life was determined to make me a hardened criminal and say fuck humanity. So, I’ll take the hope. I am my father’s child, though, right?” Emma’s chest swelled a little. Sure, her father had a lot of flaws, but so did most people. Beyond that, though, he was an awesome guy with a kind soul and loving heart. More often than not, he was the one who could tell something was wrong with her out of her parents and he knew the right things to say. He even admitted it took him losing her a second time to figure that out, but he never wanted to be without her again.

A tender smile settled on Regina’s face. “You are, which is why you’re a noble idiot.”

“I’ll take that as the compliment I know you want it to be.” Emma sighed and pulled Regina just a little closer. “So, now that we have everything settled, can I tell you something else?”
“What?”

“I really want to kiss you right now.”

Regina’s eyes went wide for a second, like it was news to her. “Oh. Well, you may do that any time you wish now. We are partners, after all.”

Emma grinned, but Regina caught her by surprise and kissed her senseless. Emma whimpered against Regina’s soft lips and whined as Regina pulled away, probably for air, which was not that important to Emma right now. Emma chased after her, needing those lips, that mouth. Regina chuckled a little and pecked Emma on the mouth.

“You’re awesome. Can we make out like teenagers for the rest of the night?” Emma grinned.

“I would love nothing more than to do that. You’ve woken something inside of me,” Regina said.

Emma wiggled her eyebrows. “Your sex drive?”

Regina gave a quick nod. “One touch from you and now I understand why people do it for more than just control and to scratch an itch.”

Well, if she had not been bursting with pride already, those words definitely put Emma over the top. “I look forward to changing your views on sex for a long time coming.”

Regina smiled and Emma would have liked to bask in that for a moment, but she needed to kiss Regina right now. Not fighting the urge, she went in for another kiss. It was deeper than the other and very noisy, with hungry little sounds coming from both of them. Regina’s hands caressed Emma’s cheeks and ran through her hair while Emma’s hands rubbed the curve of Regina’s belly and her sides.

Somehow through the course of totally making out like horny teenagers, Emma shifted on top of Regina. Regina shamelessly ground against Emma’s thigh, which made Emma whine into her mouth. They were doing this. If they did not do this, Emma would die on top of Regina.

“This okay?” Emma breathed.

“Can you…” Regina shifted her hips, rubbing against Emma more. “Please?”

“We’re going to have to work on your vocabulary eventually, but I can totally…” Emma did not finish that thought, needing her mouth back on Regina’s lips.

Emma moved, so she was propped up on one elbow and making sure her weight was not on Regina’s bump. With her free hand, Emma stroked Regina’s thigh, making her shiver. Easing her wanting fingers up Regina’s smooth leg, she discovered Regina was not wearing underwear. The very notion made her groan into Regina’s mouth.

“You naughty little thing. You came in here with the plan to seduce me, didn’t you?” Emma said. Not that I’m unappreciative of the effort.

“One can only hope,” Regina remarked.

“Spread for me and you will have to hope no longer.”

Regina moaned and did as asked. Emma’s breath caught in her throat as she made contact with Regina’s desire. Regina was so warm and wet and Emma never wanted to leave. Running her
fingers up and down, she slipped inside Regina and was certain she could lose her mind from feeling Regina pulse around her. Emma groaned and her nerves twitched.

“So fucking amazing,” Emma whispered in awe.

Regina cried out and arched into Emma, throwing her arms around Emma’s neck as Emma buried herself knuckle deep. Regina pulled her down for a kiss as she got a slow rhythm. She wanted to savor the moment. Her thumb glided across Regina’s clit as her fingers curled and moved. Regina made little noises again, each sound vibrating through Emma, hitting her in places that craved attention.

“Emma,” Regina moaned and bucked. “More…”

Emma was not sure if the request was for another finger or harder, so she went with both, remembering the state Regina had been in before. Using her thigh for leverage, Emma added a third finger and Regina’s breath hitched in Emma’s ear. Emma thought she might explode when Regina clutched her back like a lifesaver. The bite her nails into Emma’s bare shoulders might as well have been feather kisses. It felt so good.

“Regina,” Emma groaned. “You feel so good.” I want this every single day, all the time. Hearing Regina’s breath in her ear, feeling Regina clutch her fingers, smelling the scent of Regina all over the room, it was enough to make Emma’s head fly off.

Regina panted and nipped her ear. Emma groaned again and turned her head, needing more kisses. At the feel of Regina’s tongue, Emma put in more effort into giving Regina everything she wanted, everything they wanted. Emma needed to feel Regina climax around her fingers or she was certain she would go mad. A mere seconds later, she was rewarded. Regina crowed as she fluttered around Emma’s digits. Emma pulsed in sympathy with her, but she would need more than that to properly take the edge off.

“Thank you,” Regina whispered before planting wet kisses on any part of Emma she could reach. “Now, for you.”

“Me?” Emma squeaked. She had not expected that. Why did I not expect that? “Are you sure you don’t want me to…” She merely moved her fingers a little. She would love nothing more than to have Regina every which way possible all night long.

Regina moaned and wiggled. “I’d much rather find out what you taste like. It’s been on my mind for quite a while.”

Okay, wow. “Well, who am I to deny you?” Emma rolled over, back to her space on the bed.

Regina barely let Emma get settled before attacking her with that wonderful mouth again. There were butterfly kisses on her face, which quickly moved down her neck. There was a brief pause, just to remove her tank top, and then that magical mouth was back on her hot skin, kissing everywhere. She hummed and purred until Regina wrapped her lips around Emma’s nipple. Emma moaned loudly, sat up just a little, and pressed Regina closer.

“Fuck,” Emma hissed.

“Yes, that is the general idea,” Regina replied.

Regina nibbled and Emma writhed. Emma had not expected Regina’s mouth to feel that damned good. Emma wanted to make a comment, but just as she opened her mouth to say something smart, Regina gave her a little bite. All words flew from her mind as jolts of pleasure shot through her entire
After giving her other nipple the same attention, Regina kissed her way down Emma’s body and rid Emma of very sticky briefs. Emma barely had time to wrap her mind around the idea that Regina was going down on her before she felt Regina’s sweet mouth on her. She cried out, scared she might have woken Henry. *Her mouth is a fucking sin!*

Emma put her hand over her mouth as Regina ran her tongue slowly up and down, savoring Emma. Passion burned every inch of Emma and she knew she would not last long. She did not even care. It was not like Regina would be bothered by the fact that Emma came in under a minute. Hell, Emma was not sure she held out for thirty seconds. She just knew when Regina’s lips latched onto her and she sucked, Emma screamed again. The intense pleasure at her core quickly spread throughout her body until she felt it to the edges of her hair and then her whole body erupted into pure bliss. She lost track of the world for several long seconds.

“You are some kind of goddess,” Emma breathed as Regina settled in next to her.

Regina smirked. “A sex goddess?”

“And you’re all mine. It is going to be awesome when you kill me with orgasms.” Emma chuckled. She felt boneless and light.

“Or just kill you.”

“Nah, we both know you think I’m too cute to kill, except with orgasms.”

Regina snorted. “You keep thinking that.”

“I will.” Emma wrapped her arm around Regina’s shoulders and pulled her close. “Are you going to sleep here?”

Regina made herself comfortable. “I have to. I wouldn’t be able to sleep if I left.”

“You really dream about me like that?”

Regina sighed. “Do we really need to talk about this right now? Your ego should be sufficiently stroked after finding out you’ve awakened my proper sex drive.”

“I think the pregnancy did that, but I’ll take credit for it. If this is going to be a normal thing, we should tell Henry soon, right? I mean, I don’t want him to freak out if he sees us sleeping in the same bed.”

“Yes, that would be unpleasant. Do you think this will be too much? He was so upset when he found out about the…” Regina swallowed hard. “The baby.” *Oh, she said it again! She’s finally processed this whole thing and now we can just be a family.*

Emma figured it might help to encourage Regina. “It’s all right to say, you know?”

Regina pursed her lips. “It’s hard. Even with my changing appearance, it’s hard. I can barely believe this is real. For a long time, I felt like this was some hallucination brought on by too many head injuries. I still don’t understand how this happened. My potion held steady for decades and all of my books tell me that the potion should still be in effect. This whole thing makes no sense.”

Emma eased her hand to Regina’s stomach and gently caressed the bump. “But, you don’t regret it, right?”
“I will have this baby, Emma. I may dislike the sperm donor of this situation quite a bit, but I have nothing against the baby. It’s just surreal.”

“Have you spoke to the… sperm donor of this situation?” Emma asked. She really did not want to know, but it would give her a chance to see how serious Regina was about not having Robin in her life.

“Why would I? He’s too busy trying to save his failing marriage, so everyone will continue to believe what a great and honorable man he is. He wants nothing to do with this child and I want nothing to do with him.”

Emma held her a little closer. “You really don’t like him, huh?”

“I don’t like what I become around him. This never should have happened. I was trying to save his wife, who he was so over, he couldn’t even cure her with True Love’s Kiss. Beyond that, in the back of my mind, I always knew I was with him for the wrong reasons.”

“The soul mate thing?”

Regina shook her head. “Not even that. I’ve always believed that to be joke. How would magic know I’m supposed to be with someone I don’t even know? Not to mention the pixie dust proclaimed us soul mates decades ago. How much had we changed in that time? I know I’m certainly not the same person. So, beyond not knowing him in the first place, we had already changed so much from when the magic was first used. But, still, I did not know anything about him. What if I hate little things about him, like the way he eats? Or… smells.” Her gnashed her teeth.

“I’m assuming you actually do hate the way he smells.”

“It’s quite a rustic aroma, which I’m sure is right for someone out there, but not me.”

Emma tilted her head. “What smell did you want?”

“Leather and cheap shampoo.”

“I’ll have you know my shampoo is not cheap. Not all of us can afford boutique, special brand, flown in from Switzerland just to smell like apples shampoo.”

Regina smiled a little. “I’m glad you think so highly of my shampoo.”

Emma leaned down and rubbed her nose in Regina’s hair. “It does smell nice.”

“As does yours, but we both know you’re not spending much money on it. Anyway, Robin… even though I didn’t even want to admit to myself at the time, he was a placeholder. You were off with the stupid pirate. What was I do? Pine for you for the rest of my life? I had done something similar before and lost my entire mind. I thought this would be the simpler solution.”

Emma frowned. “Did I have a chance if I didn’t let Hook wear me down?”

“No, that I don’t know. I’m not sure if I was ready to admit to myself what any of these complex emotions were in regards to you. It was easier to just slip off with Robin.”

Emma was not sure what to say to that. “You don’t think it’ll be hard to have a baby by a man you dislike?”

Regina scoffed. “I have worked it out in my mind a long time ago that Robin and this baby are two
separate entities. I will never have to say the name Robin or think about him. I don’t care if this baby
looks just like him. The two will never be associated in my brain.”

“So, it’s really just the idea that you’re pregnant that still makes your mind spin?”

“Yes. And what am I do with another child?”

“What are we,” Emma corrected her.

“Fine. What are we to do with another child? Henry is almost grown. In four years, he’ll be
graduating and going off to college and there will be a toddler here for us to take through the whole
process again.”

“But, we’ll be doing it together and we’ll raise another awesome kid.”

Regina was silent and Emma decided not to press. A lot just happened after all. Emma needed to
process just as much. She and Regina were partners. Well, they had felt like partners for a while
now, but not in the romantic sense. In just about any other way Emma could think of, though, and
she was overjoyed it was in the romantic way now as well. She needed to plan dates while they still
had the time, before the baby became everything.

Emma was about to ask Regina where she wanted to go for their first date, but found Regina was
already asleep. There was a cute smile on her face and, suddenly, everything felt right in Emma’s
world. She pulled the covers of them and kissed Regina. Regina curled up close to her.

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“Here you go,” Emma said, presenting Ruby with a bouquet of yellow and orange roses surrounded
by white chrysanthemums. Maurice French had the nerve to offer her advice about dealing with
Regina since she had to buy two bouquets in two days. It had taken a lot of willpower not to shove
the flowers up his ass.

Ruby blinked. “Emma, I like you and all, but I have a girlfriend. And you’re my goddaughter.”

“Shut up!” Emma laughed and shoved Ruby a bit. “These are a thank you, so stop making it weird.”

Ruby chuckled. “I live to make things weird. So, I’m guessing things went right between you and
the other one.” She looked around. The diner was not as busy as it usually was, as it was an off-hour,
but there were still people there.

“You can’t smell it, can you?” Emma made sure to take an extra long shower that morning, scrubbed
extra hard, and then put on lotion to avoid offending Ruby.

“Nope. You smell like you, but extra clean. There was a repeat performance, though?”

Emma grinned. “And there’ll be more to come.”

Ruby nodded. “So, when are you going to tell people?”

“We didn’t talk about that. We’ll tell Henry first. I guess I have to tell my parents.”

“Dude, you live with her. I think your parents have figured this shit out,” Ruby stated. “Well, your
mother at least. Your father might think you have some weird girl bestie thing going on, which is
what you thought, so I’m almost certain your father thinks that now.”

“Why am I friends with you again?”
Ruby held up the flowers. “Because I give kick ass advice.”

Emma scoffed. “You just don’t want to be the only lesbian in town.”

“Bisexual. And, it will be nice to have a couple to double date with.”

“You’ve double dated with my parents.”

“Yeah, but your dad makes it weird. I don’t think he trusts Dorothy yet and he probably feels like the
odd man out being the only man there. A double date between us wouldn’t be nearly as awkward.
Plus, Dorothy doesn’t come with all the baggage a lot of people would if they had to sit across the
table from you know who.”

Emma nodded. “Is this your way of claiming a time slot once we let everyone know?”

“Yup. So, once you’re out, we’re going out.”

Emma laughed, but she agreed. It would do well for Regina to get out. Hell, her as well. Besides,
they needed to do things before the baby came, as that would be their entire lives for a few months.
She decided to throw the idea out to Regina.

-8-8-8-8-

“A double date? Isn’t that a little…” Regina did not seem to know how to finish the thought. Her
eyes lowered to her lunch as her words trailed off.

“It’ll be good to get out. I mean, how often have you gotten out in the past few months? You have
lunch with me and you have lunch with Kathryn. You don’t see anyone else. I mean, what happened
with Maleficent? You don’t even hang out with her,” Emma pointed out.

Regina shook her head. “She’s busy bonding with her daughter. Kathryn is more than enough when
you’re not around.”

“But, you might like hanging out with Dorothy and you don’t hate Ruby, right?”

“She is not unpleasant to be around. A little over the top, but not unpleasant. I often wonder how she
and your mother are best friends.”

Emma laughed. “They’re really different, but they’re all about each other, like weird sisters or
something. My point is we should get out and I do want to take you on dates anyway.” A double
date might be a good way to start, having a buffer between them and the rest of the town. They
would not have to field too many questions.

“We’ll see if we have time.”

“I guess. We do still have to tell Henry and my parents.”

Regina arched an eyebrow. “You mean your parents haven’t assumed anything? They know Hook
is out of the picture and you’re practically living with me.”

“Well, I still need to confirm for them.”

“I suppose. Hopefully, this won’t begin a new feud. I don’t think I’ll have the energy for such a
thing,” Regina said.

Emma snickered. “I think you’re safe.” It was not like her parents objected to her being around
Regina or living with her. They barely questioned the living arrangement back when it started and now just accepted that Emma lived with Regina and Henry.

“Hopefully, this will finally get Hook off of your back.”

Emma grunted. “So, you know about that?”

“You did arrest him for harassment not too long ago, dearest.”

“Right.” Emma sighed. “I think he’s done for the moment. He wasn’t expecting Mulan to jump in. Plus, Ruby jumps in whenever he tries to talk to me at the diner. At this point, he’d probably have to fight all my friends and then my dad before he even got to say a word to me. You know David literally threw him out of the station after we released him.”

“I suppose your father isn’t a complete waste of space then.” Regina smiled a little.

“Yeah, it was funny because Hook thinks my dad likes him and wants us to be together. He was in for a rude awakening and really surprised at how strong David is.” Emma enjoyed the look of disbelief on Hook’s face when her father flung him out of the police station.

Regina nodded. “Other than that, any other business?”

“Well, I told you about how Mulan’s looking for an apartment, right? She wants Marian to move in with her. Things don’t seem to be doing well for her and Robin.”

Regina rolled her eyes. “I can’t imagine why.”

“No, but this is serious. Marian is scared Robin will keep Roland from her. So, I was just wondering if you could talk to Kathryn for them. And, maybe keep an eye out for a job opening for Marian.”

“How is it I keep helping a woman who despises me?”

“I used to ask myself the same question.”

“As did I.”

Emma grinned. “Touché.”

With that said, they moved the conversation along. Things flowed so smoothly between them. Emma never noticed it, but it felt wonderful. She doubted she ever connected with a person the way she did with Regina. It amazed her that it took her so long to figure out why that was. But, she was there now and they had a family and they were together. Life is awesome.

-8-8-8-8-

Next time: they tell Henry (seems like they did that before).
12: The Other Side

Henry had a… suspicious nature and Emma thought that was a kind way to put it. Sometimes, he seemed downright paranoid, which she supposed he got from every single parent he had. He also had a sixth sense for whenever something in his environment changed. So, during breakfast, it was hardly a surprise when he watched Emma and Regina like he expected them to grow wings.

“You made chocolate chip pancakes,” Henry said. There was a stack of four in front of him along with sausage and an omelet oozing with so much cheese Emma could not wait to bite into her own.

“Yes. We all know I’ve developed quite the sweet tooth,” Regina replied as she eased a plate in front of Emma.

“Yeah, but these are my favorite after cinnamon pancakes. So, what’s going on? Emma’s not pregnant now, too, right?” Henry turned to Emma, who winced.

“Oh, no, we’re eating these damned pancakes, so stomach you settled down.

“Then, what’s going on? Oh, god, we’re not about to have another baby talk, are we?” Henry groaned and sank in his seat.

“No, and what’s wrong with the baby talks?” Emma frowned. She wanted to make sure Henry was mentally okay and prepared for when they had a new child in the house. She knew how jarring that could be.

“Because you keep checking in on me like I’m gonna break or go crazy or something. I’m fine,” Henry replied.

“Excuse me for caring,” Emma huffed. She could not believe she was catching flack for trying to be a good parent.

“All right, you two. Might we have a civilized breakfast on this fine weekend?” Regina inquired as she eased into her seat. Along with her pancakes, she had a bowl of mixed fruit and a green shake. Yes, she had a sweet tooth and a carving for red meat that would make a lion pause, but they were all careful about her diet and making sure she got the nutrients she needed.

“But, something’s up,” Henry said.

“Nothing’s up. You make it sound like it’s something bad,” Emma said, turning her attention to her breakfast and drowning her pancakes in syrup. She dipped her sausage in syrup and took a huge bite, moaning as the favor hit her tongue. I hope Henry takes the news okay, so we can make it through breakfast.
“Okay, but there’s something going on. Maybe it’s not bad, but there’s something. So, can you just tell me?” Henry requested.

Emma and Regina looked at each other. Emma gave a little head tilt, wanting Regina to field this one. Regina would probably put it more elegantly than Emma and Emma did not want Henry to walk away feeling like their relationship was something gross. That wouldn’t be a good start to anything.

“Henry, Emma and I have decided to see each other romantically,” Regina said. Emma shot her a look. I could’ve said that! Regina shrugged.

Henry’s face scrunched up. “I thought you guys were already going out.”

Emma’s eyes went wide as she turned back to him. “Huh?” Sausage was forgotten for a moment.

“Well, you’re here all the time. You take Mom to all of her appointments and always check to make sure she remembers her vitamins. You’re the only one Mom trusts besides me with all of this. You’re the one Mom texts or calls when she needs something. You rub her feet for goodness sake. And you guys have that whole gross, googly eye thing like Grams and Gramps do,” Henry explained.

Regina scowled at him. “We do not!” Any comparison to Snow White and Prince Charming had to be the most insulting thing on Earth for Regina.

“You totally do. Mom, you kiss Emma’s forehead and cheek a lot. I mean, like all the time,” Henry pointed out.

Regina blinked. “I do?”

Emma rubbed her forehead, as if trying to feel for indents from Regina’s lips. “Now that I think about it, you do.” It was more than just comforting her during nightmares, but there were farewell kisses as she left the house and “Hi, honey, I’m home” type kisses, too. How the hell did I not notice that? Her brain probably blocked it out to avoid freaking her out.

“Yeah.” Henry grinned. “Wait, do you mean you guys only just figured out you’re in love with each other?” He laughed. “I thought you knew and that’s why you did all that stuff!”

Regina groaned and hid her face in her hands. Emma wanted to sink into the floor. How did their kid know they were in love before they did?

Wait, does this mean Regina’s in love with me? Emma looked over, trying to keep the hope out of her gaze. Regina was not looking at her, though, too busy being mortified that Henry read them like one of his storybooks.

“You’re awful, you know that, right?” Emma grumbled. She was tempted to throw some eggs at him, but she was hungry and they were delicious.

“This explains why you stay in the guest room, though. I wondered about that. It’s weird. Then, I thought maybe you just wanted your own space since that’s not something you usually have. It’s really nice Mom gave you space. Then, I thought, well, Mom used to be a queen, so maybe she’s old fashion and you guys wouldn’t be in the same bed until you got married,” Henry said.

“Please, stop talking,” Emma begged while Regina groaned from behind her hands. This might actually ruin breakfast for me.

Henry kept snickering. “This is going to be a hilarious story to tell my sibling.”
Emma suddenly knew how to get off of the conversation, so she could enjoy her food and share happy news. “Regina’s letting me name the baby. You want to help get a list together?”

Henry’s eyes sparkled and he leaned over the table, as if needing to be closer to her to share in her joy. “Oh, so you know if it’s a boy or a girl?”

Emma shook her head. “Regina doesn’t want to know, but she says I can find out to help with names. I’m not going to tell you, though, so you don’t accidentally tell your mom.”

Henry glared at her. “I’m not going to accidentally tell anyone. Have I accidentally told someone Mom is pregnant?”

“That’s true, but this is easier to give away than that is and you’re so eager about doing stuff for the baby. You might just make a little slip about what color we’re painting the nursery or something,” Emma explained.

“Didn’t we already agree to do that really nice teal? Even though I still think the sky blue would be nice. It doesn’t seem boyish to me at all,” Henry argued.

“And when did you two even discuss nursery colors?” Regina inquired.

“We do have lives outside of you, Mom,” Henry remarked. Emma did her best not to laugh, but she knew her face gave away the fact that she was cracking up on the inside.

Regina glared at Emma. “He gets that from you.”

Emma scoffed. “He gets that from me? Have you met you?”

And just like that crisis was averted. They had a wonderful breakfast. Emma and Henry discussed their plans for the nursery openly. Regina never joined in, but she did not interrupt either. One worrying thing was that Regina did not smile through the entire conversation. Emma wondered how long the pregnancy would seem so surreal to Regina that she seemed to take it as they were talking about someone else entirely. How do I help her get over the hump?

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At the ultrasound, Emma took plenty of video on her phone, even though Regina scowled at her the entire time. It was a little funny. Now that she permission to find out the baby’s gender and they were at the prime time for her to know it, she did not care to. She would just come up with baby names on her own and see what felt right. She and Henry already knew what they wanted in the nursery and they decided to buy gender neutral things online. She was also going to try to a sneak a trip with him out of Storybrooke one weekend, so they could do some baby shopping and some bonding.

Once the examination was over, Emma wanted to go over her checklist with the doctor. Regina never stuck around for that and today was no different. Emma had planned on that.

“Hey, Doctor Alex,” Emma said as she eased into a chair in front of the desk in the office just adjacent to the examination room.

Doctor Alexander sighed. “Emma, I have asked you not to call me that.”

Emma smiled. “I’m sorry. I just think it fits you. Anyway, I was wondering something.”

“About the Queen or the baby?”

The baby! Emma suddenly knew how to get off of the conversation, so she could enjoy her food and share happy news. “Regina’s letting me name the baby. You want to help get a list together?”
“Is normal for an expectant mother to be so detached?” Emma asked.

“You don’t think Regina is connecting with the baby?”

Emma sucked her teeth. “Come on, doc. You know it and I know it. Do you think Regina just feels pressure to have this baby? I mean, she doesn’t seem enthused at all. I thought, you know, Super Mom would jump at this, but instead, she seems to think if she ignores it just enough it might go away and it’s… I dunno, scary,” Emma explained.

“Well, having a baby is a scary thing. Plus, we’ve discussed how her age could factor into things.”

Emma nodded, remembering that moment. Regina had gone white as a sheet. Doctor Alexander had to spend long minutes, at least ten, assuring Regina that everything was going fine. She was healthy, the baby was healthy, and how “could” did not mean “would.”

“I don’t think she’s scared, though. Most of the time, she doesn’t even seem to think she’s pregnant. It’s like this is all happening to someone else. Sometimes, I think when we’re here, she’s pretending we’re here for me. That’s not healthy and I don’t know how to help her. I don’t know if this is normal and I don’t know what to do.” Emma felt lost. What if Regina’s attitude did not change when the baby came? What would happen to the kid then? She could not imagine Regina ignoring the baby, but she could not imagine Regina being so indifferent to a pregnancy either, but here they were.

Doctor Alexander sighed. “Emma, I understand Regina doesn’t mind me telling you whatever you want to know about this pregnancy, but you have to realize I’m not her psychologist.”

“I know, but is this normal? I mean, I only have my own pregnancy to go on and stuff I read on the internet, which I know not to trust completely, I know there’s mood swings, but I don’t think this counts. I mean, she doesn’t really have those, beyond her usual crankiness anyway. Well, and her weird affectionate moments, I guess. She seems okay until there’s any sort of mention of the baby. She said the word ‘baby’ the other night for like the first time and I thought she was going throw up afterwards. She’s only said the word ‘baby’ a few times and I don’t think she’d say the word ‘pregnant’ with a gun to her head.”

“That’s something you should talk to her about.”

Emma sighed and her shoulders slumped. “I was afraid you’d say that. I don’t want to upset her, though.”

“Well, it’s not good to upset pregnant women, but I’m not sure there’s much you could do that would upset Regina.”

Emma scoffed. “You have to know about our epic face-offs. Sometimes, I think my breathing upsets Regina.”

Doctor Alexander tilted her head a little. “I doubt that’s true. Look, you care about her and the child, right?”

“Of course I do.”

“Then, just do as you have been doing, Emma.”

“What am I doing?”

“Being there for her, supporting her, taking care of her. Do that.”
Emma beamed. “No problem with that.”

“Good. Not enough people have done that for her.”

Emma’s expression fell. “But, it will help her, right? I mean, I don’t want her to give birth to a baby and then resent the little guy or girl. A kid doesn’t deserve that and I know it would crush Regina if I had to point out she was doing that. I don’t want this to make her life miserable.”

“Emma, I will be honest with you, I have known the Queen since she was moved into the palace too many years ago. I have seen many sides of her. I have seen her miserable. She is far from it and I am certain she will remain far from it as long as you stay by her side. You’re doing her more good than I think either of you can imagine.”

It took all of Emma’s self control to not literally puff her chest out. She smiled and nodded, though. The doctor smiled at her and it was back to business. Emma made sure she had everything she needed to know until their next appointment.

-8-8-8-8-

Emma wanted to do something for Regina, something small and private to help lift her spirits. Maybe even get her to open up about the pregnancy. She barely had to explain it to Henry, who was all too happy for Emma to do something nice for his mother. Henry went to hang with his grandparents and they did not question why. Emma moved about the kitchen, shaking to upbeat, pop music as she prepared dinner.

While dinner cooked, Emma set up the dining room. She took out the good china, and hoped Regina would not slaughter her for it, and lit some candles. Regina was working late. Emma had a feeling it had to do with the fact that she found Regina sleeping at her desk earlier that day. How no one else figured out Regina was pregnant was beyond Emma.

The front door opened just as Emma plated the food. She eased everything on to the table, changed the music to soft classical, and then went to greet Regina. She paused, appreciating the sight at the door, Regina bent over, taking off her shoes.

That ass is a thing of beauty.

“Hey, need any help?” Emma asked.

Regina looked up, smiling at her. “No, I’m fine.”

“Let me help anyway.” Emma moved to Regina side, just to hold her up.

Regina paused in what she was doing to give Emma a kiss. It was short and sweet. Regina gave her another smile and removed her other shoe.

“You want a foot rub?” Emma offered.

“No, I don’t need one.” Regina looked around, scanning the house. “Where’s Henry?”

“He wanted to hang out with his grandparents. So, it’s just you and me.” Emma caressed the small of Regina’s back. “And I’ve made dinner, for our first date if you want to count it this way.” She would prefer to take Regina out, but she was not sure when Regina would go for that.

“You made dinner? It’s not tacos again, is it?” Regina groaned.

Emma was not moved. “You ate four of them last time I made them.”
“Yes, well, we know my situation.”

“I also know you swallow tacos with the works. But, this day, I didn’t make tacos. I can cook meals that aren’t as fun.”

Regina made a noise and went to investigate. Emma followed behind her, waiting to see Regina’s expression at the “real meal.” She had not expected Regina to stop in her tracks when the dinner came into view.

“You made beef stew?” Regina asked.

“It’s something I’ve toyed with from my second memories. I’ve put my own little spin on it. I think you’ll like it,” Emma replied.

“If there’s cinnamon in this, I will slay you and eat you with the stew,” Regina said.

Emma snickered and kissed Regina’s cheek. She pulled Regina’s seat out for her. Regina nodded her thanks and settled in her chair at the head of the table, as always. Emma pulled her chair closer to Regina’s to give them some sense of intimacy. Regina studied the meal, picked up her fork, but did not eat anything.

“I didn’t poison it. It tastes good, I promise,” Emma said.

Regina shook her head. “I’m sure it does. I was just lost in a memory for a moment.”

“Care to share?” Emma tried not to look giddy, eager for information about Regina, maybe some insight on how to make her comfortable with her pregnancy.

“I used to eat stew often when I was alone.”

“So, not a good memory?”

“No, actually, very good. Stew was considered lower class food. You throw meat and vegetables all in one pot and they have to mingle, as if you don’t have time to prepare each individually or you can’t afford another cooking pot. I first had it with Daniel, as my mother never allowed it for supper. Then, I could only have it when the King was gone. It became a treat, a way to celebrate,” Regina explained.

Emma wanted to ask more about the King, but decided to stay on the happy track. “You sound like me when I had my first upscale baked good.”

“Ah, is that what little Emma Swan enjoyed whenever the moment called for celebration? Starting your love of bear claws?” Regina’s eyes sparkled before she took her first forkful of food. Her entire face slowly lit up and she purred. “That is good.”

“Try it with the bread.” Emma pushed the basket toward Regina while on the inside she preened. She put that bright smile on Regina’s face. 

Regina nodded and did as suggested. “You were saying about the bear claws?”

“Baked goods in general. You know my childhood wasn’t the best, so I never really had sweets. One time while I making my way on the streets, I managed to lift a red velvet cupcake and oh my god. I think I saw God when I ate it.”

Regina chuckled. “Did you begin stealing in order to support your baked goods habit?”
“You know, I almost fell in with some prostitutes over baked goods.”

With a smile, Regina ate more stew, mixing it with her rice. “Do I even want to know this story? I mean, I can see how since you are you, but I still can’t imagine it.”

“It’s not as bumbling as you think it is. And, before you say it, no, I wasn’t going to turn tricks for a bear claw.”

Regina smirked. “I’ve seen the way you look at them.”

Emma snickered. “Shut up or I’ll never make this beef stew again.”

Regina gasped and clutched her chest. “No. How will I go on?”

“Oh, please, from the look on your face when you first tasted it, I’m sure I can get all sorts of sexual favors out of you if I promise to make it.”

“And you want me to believe you didn’t turn tricks for bear claws?”

Emma laughed. “Of course you’d take it there.” Wait, the conversation was way off track. She was supposed to be making Regina feel comfortable.

“Tell me how you avoided sex work for pastries.”

“If you tell me about your stew experiences.”

Regina waved it off. “There’s not much to tell. I just was able to be alone for a while, not have to play a role, and enjoy a food that’s delicious regardless of what the nobility and royalty thought.”

“A little rebellion, then, huh?” Emma shrugged. “For me, I was young and on the street. This group of women sorta watched over me. I was pickpocket mostly and wasn’t the best at it, but I wasted my money on cupcakes. A few teased me with the money they made. I didn’t realize they were trying to coax me into the life. This guy, Nathan, he kinda swooped in and let me know that some of the pimps were eyeing me. He got me away from them before something happened.”

Regina nodded and reached for more bread. “Good man, unless of course he got you into something else.”

“Well, he was sort of an Artful Dodger kinda guy. He taught me how to pickpocket much better and showed me different lock picking styles. It saved me from a corner.”

“Then, good man.”

Emma nodded and steered the conversation away from her teenager years. She had Regina guess the spices used in the stew. It took two helpings, but Regina nailed them all. Then, Emma brought in dessert and Regina all but threw her panties at Emma.

“I’m eating all of these cinnamon buns, taking you upstairs, and there will be no sleep tonight,” Regina announced before taking a bite of the gooey pastry. She moaned as icing oozed out of the corner of her mouth.

Emma sat back and smiled. She fought off the urge to wiggle in her seat or pat herself on the back. I can take care of Regina and make sure she’s okay. She wished she could do more. Little by little, I’ll do my best.

-8-8-8-8-
Emma’s mood and feeling of usefulness was short-lived, lasting only until the next day. It was miracle she had not died. She huffed and growled as she made her way back to the sheriff’s station. Someone was going to get punched so hard in the face when she found out who the hell went all Poison Ivy on the town’s botanical gardens. She was covered in sap, pollen, syrup, and whatever the hell else came from plants.

“It was like someone decided to do Fantasia without the music and turn it into a horror movie,” Emma said, flinging off of her shredded coat. Several plant thorns had rendered her coat and shirt worthless. Thankfully, they had not penetrated too deeply. Every inch of her body ached, though.

“You know, if you just called Regina like I said,” David groaned, trailing behind her. He was just as filthy as she was, dripping plant secretions on the floor. He lost a boot, but luckily still had his foot. His pants had been torn to shreds by a cactus with space issues.

“We handled it,” Emma snarled. “We don’t need to call Regina for everything.” This is one of the problems around here. They always expect someone else to clean up their mess.

“We are the police,” Mulan concurred. Her sword came in handy today, but that did not save her from needing a bath just like the rest of them. She fought valiantly and managed to at least keep all of her clothing. Of course, she had on her battle armor, so maybe she was a little more prepared than Emma and David.

“Exactly. We’re supposed to protect and serve this community,” Emma said.

“A cactus hugged me and giant Venus fly trap sneezed on me. I think that’s the point where you call Regina,” David argued.

“Oh, yeah, because you’re the only one it sneezed on. Hell, the damn thing ate me. I’ll be having Little Shop of Horrors nightmares for weeks to come. Besides, I’m sure this isn’t the first time a killer plant sneezed on any of us,” Emma countered.

David could not argue that point. Emma refused to call Regina for the bit of insane botany that claimed the sheriff’s department’s afternoon because of the baby. She did not want to chance Regina getting hurt. Plus, she was not sure about Regina’s mindset and she was not sure how Regina would approach a fight of any kind right now. She did not need any heroic sacrifices from Regina. Of course, we do that type of shit without babies being involved.

“Anyway, Mulan, thanks for coming in, even though it’s not your shift,” Emma said.

Mulan shook her head. “We are a small force and have to go when we are needed.”

Smiling, Emma nodded. If only there were just another one of her we could hire. “I’ll talk to Regina about getting you some overtime. It’ll help with rent. How’s the new place working out?” Emma had not had a chance to see Mulan’s new apartment in person, but she had helped her pick it out online. It looked nice based on the ten pictures on the website. Mulan sang its praises the first day she saw it and scooped it up right after.

“Very good. I’ve been going to the classes to understand the contracts I signed for it and things like that. Kathryn has been very patient with me and she introduced me to people who work at the bank, so they’ve been helpful in setting up different accounts and understanding my renter’s agreement. You should come over. You might be able to help me fight against Marian on how to furnish it. She doesn’t think I have any taste,” Mulan remarked, but she smiled as she spoke.

Emma almost commented that Marian did not have good taste if her husband was any indication, but
she held off. Marian seemed sweet and Mulan certainly liked her. There was no reason to be catty.

“How are things going with Marian?” Emma asked, grabbing a towel from the locker room to wipe her face. Regina had not said anything on helping Marian, but Emma suspected given the little updates Mulan offered, like the fact that Marian had a job as a teller at new branch of Storybrooke Bank now.

“There’s a court meeting today. Between Marian and Robin, I mean. I will be there to support her,” Mulan replied.

Emma nodded. “Then, shouldn’t you go clean up? Make sure you dress nice for court. Not your warrior armor, something more business-like. I’m sure Ruby’s taken you shopping.”

“She has.”

“Good. When in doubt, black slacks and a button down always work. Good luck.”

Mulan nodded and was off. Emma smiled, happy Mulan was so happy. She deserved it considering everything she had been through. She hoped Marian ended up happy as well. She needed something more than a guy who would bed someone ten feet from her frozen body after failing to cure her curse with True Love’s Kiss. Ass.

“I should go home and catch a shower, too,” Emma muttered.

“We can’t all go home and have a shower,” David objected.

Emma arched an eyebrow. “Is that why you’re leaning toward the door?”

David opened his mouth to respond, but Emma’s phone rang. She already knew who it was thanks to the ring tone. What would the mayor think if she knew her office ringtone was the Imperial March? Why do I get the feeling I’m in trouble?

Emma answered the call anyway. “Hello?”

“Why am I just now hearing about mutant plants on the loose and eating people?” Regina roared.

Emma winced and moved the phone from close to her ear. “We handled it. It’s our job.”

“I could’ve helped!”

“I know you could have, but we had it under control. We’re the police force around here. This is our job.” Emma had already practiced this argument in her head on the way over. “Plus, it was good training for Deputy Fa.”

“I am not useless, Miss Swan,” Regina growled.

Whoa, I didn’t think she’d take it there. Emma suspected Regina would be upset because they did not go to her for help, not that she would assume Emma thought she could not help. “I never said you were.”

“I am not some delicate flower.”

“Again, I never said you were.” But, you are pregnant. Emma wisely kept that to herself. “Regina, you can’t hold our hands forever. We have to learn to handle magic stuff without you. We get sucked into portals and separated way too often to just let you handle everything. This is also why I want to expand the department. There needs to be more than just you and me fighting against crap
that happens in town.” That was the truth.

“Yet you went out,” Regina huffed.

“And proved quite useless. I gotta get more sword practice in. The gun did nothing.” Emma shook her head and felt the weight of years of abandonment push down on her shoulders. She was an embarrassment. *What would I have done if Dad and Mulan weren’t there? Probably died by the hands of a rogue salad.*

“Emma,” Regina sighed.

“Maybe I should just let my dad be sheriff.” At least her father knew when the situation called for a sword versus a gun.

“You listen to me, you are a fine sheriff and I’m sure you did your best out there. If anything, you should practice your magic more.”

Emma smiled and her shoulders lifted somewhat. “I actually did a little with my magic. It’s easier to do with you, but I was able to pull something out on my own.” It was magic or get digested by the bottom of the food chain.

Regina sighed again. “Perhaps it is best you went out on your own. You do need the practice and I seem to coddle you now when we go out.”

“You do not coddle me.” *The woman dropped me off a freaking bridge and she thinks she coddles me?*

“All right, Emma.” Her voice was way too dismissive.

“Look, I’m covered in goop and now you’re just teasing me. I’ll see you later, okay?”

“Fine. But, don’t think I appreciate finding out about this problem second hand. Did you at least save everyone from the plants while finding out your gun isn’t the answer to every problem?”

“Yes, we rescued everyone. Bye, Regina.”

Emma sighed and looked up to find she was alone in the station. Damn it, she would not forgive her father for dipping out to take a proper shower and leaving her here. Now, she would have to use the one in the locker room. The water pressure was almost nonexistent and she was almost certain it was haunted.

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Emma dragged herself into the house well after dark. Having to go to the doctor made her long day even longer. She wanted a real shower immediately and to get into some comfortable clothes. She was not quite sure what she would do about her face, but she wanted to have time to prepare for the reactions she knew she would get. She could hear Regina in the kitchen and Henry was in the living room. *Thank goodness.* Once she had a burning hot shower and got into her favorite joggers and tank top, she was ready to face the wrath of Regina.

“Hey, Emm—Ah, what happened to your face?” Henry practically screamed in terror. He even pointed, like she was some sort of monster.

Emma rolled her eyes. “Subtle, kid. Real subtle.” She probably should have warned Henry about her face and neck. Now, Regina would rush in and see and there would be a whole big thing on top of
that other whole big thing that was to come.

“What is all the yelling about?” Regina came into the room and stopped in her tracks. “Emma, what the hell happened to your face?”

Emma groaned and hid her face, which red, rough, and peeling, in her hands. “Just a stupid allergic reaction to the stupid plants.”

“How do you know that? Have you gone to the doctor? And not that idiot Whale either.” Regina hurried over to Emma, putting her hand to Emma’s chin to inspect her face at all angles.

Emma did her best not to pull away, knowing it would only make matters worse. “Yeah, I went to get it checked out after it started itching about an hour after I talked to you.”

Regina glared at her, but there was a hint of something more in honey brown eyes that Emma could not exactly make out. “Why didn’t you tell me? I would’ve gone with you.”

Emma shrugged and stepped away. “It’s not a big deal.”

“It’s a huge deal! How dare you stand here after facing down deadly plants without calling me and then tell me you had a medical emergency you didn’t share with me and it’s not a big deal?” Regina snarled.

“It wasn’t an emergency! It’s just a rash.” It was not like it was the first time in history that Emma had a rash. It was not like she had the Plague. I was lucky I had my jacket on, though. Saved my arms and shoulders this horrible fate.

Regina’s eyes burned and she gnashed her teeth. “You didn’t know that when you went in!”

Emma winced, as that was certainly true. “Okay, you shouldn’t get so worked up.”

“Don’t try to put this on me now!”

Emma glanced at Henry, who looked like he was trying to bury himself in the couch with how far back he was sitting. They should not have this discussion in front of him, but she knew if she said that to Regina, it would just set Regina off even more. She considered just taking it to get it over with quickly, but Regina might just go on all night.

“I’m sorry,” Emma said quickly.

Regina blinked and her entire being seemed to shut down for a moment. “Excuse me?”

“I’m sorry for not calling you. I just… I don’t want to worry you. You already have a lot on your plate and I don’t want to be burden. I’m supposed to be looking out for you.”

Regina frowned. “If we’re going to truly be partners, you have to let me be there for you as you are for me. It’s not a one-way street. Also, do not treat me as if I’m fragile.”

“I won’t. I’m sorry. I promise. I’m sorry.”

Regina narrowed her gaze on Emma, but then left without a word. Emma breathed a sigh of relief and collapsed on the couch. Henry frowned at her.

“What?” Emma asked.

“She’s right, you know? So, maybe you want to give her a real apology and not one meant to just
calm her down,” Henry replied.

“What do you mean?”

“Emma, we’re family now, right? And there’s a kid on the way, right?”

Emma nodded. “Right.”

“So, the same way you worry about us, we worry about you. You dismissing her like that is like
dismissing her feelings and that’s why she just walked away. She knows your apology was total BS.
I mean, I knew and I’m thirteen.”

Emma sighed and somehow managed to not throw a tantrum. “How are you more mature than I
am?”

Henry shrugged. “Good genes?” A teasing smile lit up his face.

“I’m sorry if I worried you, kid. I didn’t mean to leave you guys out. I just don’t want to freak either
of you out or stress you out. It wasn’t really dangerous out there today.”

“No, but one day it will be. One day there’ll be a new Peter Pan or Dark One or Queens of Darkness
or even Evil Queen. You can’t just lock us out and think you’re protecting us,” Henry replied.

Emma rubbed her forehead. “Okay, okay. I get it. It was a bad move on my part. I’m sorry.”

“Yeah, well, go in there and tell your partner. Unless, of course, you want Mom to totally shut down
on you.”

Emma knew that was completely true. So, she got up and jogged into the kitchen. Regina stood
there, clutching the counter. Emma’s shoulders slumped as she moved in close, putting a hand on
Regina’s waist. Regina jumped away. Emma’s heart shattered and pieces stabbed her in the throat.

“No, please, don’t do that,” Emma begged.

“Emma, I should finish dinner,” Regina said as Emma took her hand.

“No, no, no. Look, I’m really sorry. This isn’t a one-way street. You’re perfectly right. I just don’t
want to worry you and I don’t want it to seem like I can’t handle myself.”

Regina frowned. “But, it’s fine for me to not be able to handle myself?”

“Of course not. That’s not what this is. You’re handling yourself just fine. In fact, I need to be more
like you. You’ve opened yourself up to my help on so many levels and I’ve taken it to where since
I’m helping you, I can’t take your help or let you know if I need you. That’s not what being partners
is about. I have to trust you. I do trust you. I should’ve told you about the rash.”

Regina arched an eyebrow. “Only the rash?”

“The killer plants were for the sheriff’s department to handle. I’m not sure how that works. Do I
report things to you, the mayor, before or after we go after them? Do I report things to you, my
partner, before or after I try to tackle them on my own?” Emma genuinely wanted to know for both.

“As the mayor, I would like to be in the loop for things threatening the town. If you could inform me
while you’re en route, that would be great. As your partner, of course I want to know if you’re about
to go into a dangerous situation. I especially want to know if you’re ill. What if this rash had been
something more than just a little skin condition? Not that the red, patchy skin is little,” Regina
commented.

“I understand.”

Regina’s eyes narrowed on her. “Do you? Do you understand you have a family here who worries about you just as much as you worry about us and who wants to be there for you just as much as you’re here for us? Do you understand we care about you and your well being? Do you understand you have a partner who wants to be informed about every little aspect of your life? To be there for you through good times and bad?”

Emma swallowed down emotions trying to claw their way out of her throat and nodded. They care about me. She cares about me. “I know now. I wasn’t thinking about that. I was just thinking that I have to be strong.”

Sighing, Regina gave her a small smile. “Emma, we’re not going to let you go just you’re not perfect. We’re not a foster family. We’re a forever family.”

Emma felt her heart swell and she was close to tears from those simple words. Instead, she grinned, even though her bottom lip trembled. “My forever family.” Her voice cracked.

Regina took her hand and held it tight. “Yes, your forever family. So, you can’t tell me you’re here and you’ll stay and you worry about me, but won’t allow me the same courtesy. That’s not right.”

“I know now and I’m really sorry. I promise. I’m sorry. I don’t want to be a burden and this is doing just that. I want to do this right. I want to do everything right with you, with Henry, with the lump.” Emma ghosted her hand over Regina’s stomach.

Regina sighed. “Go set the table.”

Emma grinned. “Yes, ma’am.” Her insides felt light, as if they were made of joy and sunshine.

“And we are not sleeping in the same bed while your skin is that splotchy.”

“I’m being punished, aren’t I?” Emma asked. Regina did not confirm that, but Emma knew it was the truth. Hell, maybe she deserved it. She would have to be more careful, not just for herself, but for her family. And I have to let them be here for me just as I am for them.

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Next time: The towns finds out about Regina’s pregnancy and naturally assume Emma did it.
13: Spilled Tea

Emma’s rash was not bad, but Regina acted like it was the most serious skin condition she had ever seen. Regina went out and brought calamine lotion to help with the itching and gave Emma an oatmeal bath. It had not occurred to Emma that oatmeal for the bath was different than what they ate, but Regina just smiled at her when she voiced that. The bath did not help, but it was nice. And despite what she said, Regina allowed Emma to sleep in her bed, making sure Emma was completely comfortable.

Emma wished Regina was not taking care of her like a kid, but she allowed it. After all, she did a bunch of things for Regina in the past few months. It’s all about give and take. Taking did not mean Regina would eventually leave her and she needed to live through it to believe it.

But, she did not like Regina acting like she could not do anything. She went to work despite the rash, but did not get any texts from Regina to tell her about any cravings Regina might have. Regina checked on her throughout the day, but nothing about food. It was weird. Then, almost noon, she got a call from Ruby.

“You might wanna get down here. Your girlfriend waddled in and the dwarves are reckless with their mouths. I wouldn’t be surprised if someone died,” Ruby said.

Emma growled and jumped out of her chair. David looked at her, but she did not explain what happened and he did not ask. He followed her, but she did not bother to tell him it was nothing. Besides, it might be something if Regina decided to have a mood swing. Who knew what type of destruction Regina might unleash if she had a mood swing.

Emma walked into the diner just in time to see Regina raise her hand, maybe it was to gesture while yelling, maybe it was her usual flair, or maybe it was to call forth a fireball. Emma was not sure, but she would rather err on the side of caution. She grabbed Regina into a gentle hug, feeling Regina chest heave as she drew in a loud breath.

“Hey, hey, hey. It’s okay,” Emma said.

“It is far from okay. Unnamed bastard number two is lucky he didn’t get struck by lightning,” Regina growled, the vein in her forehead looking ready to burst.

Emma turned to the dwarves, glaring at the idiots who did not even have the intelligence to look scared. Did they have no idea how unpredictable a pregnant woman could be? A pregnant woman with magic? “What did unnamed bastard number two say?” And who the hell is unnamed bastard number two? Happy was one. Regina knew Leroy’s real name and cursed name because he was a pain in the ass. Dopey did not talk.

“I didn’t say anything to her!” Bashful insisted.
Emma frowned, eyes locked onto now “unnamed bastard number two.” “Maybe not to her, but you said something and she overheard.”

Regina glared at the whole group. “He said he felt sorry for my cargo.”

“Yeah, and that’s not illegal, so I don’t know why you called the sheriff on us,” Leroy stated.

“She didn’t call me, you idiot. Obviously someone who values your lives called me. Do you really think making fun of the way Regina looks is the wise thing to do if you want to live another day?” Nothing about the dwarves read as smart to Emma, not anymore anyway. She was not sure where they got their balls from, but they needed to back those things up with something or they were going to regret it one day.

“She’s not going to do anything. We’re almost certain she’s lost her magic. After all, she didn’t help anything yesterday,” Happy said.

“Unless, of course, she had something to do with those plants,” Leroy had the nerve to say.

“Okay, uncool for both of you. Regina has saved your asses more time than you have on your own, so you can’t accuse her of something. Also, it’s uncool to make fun of someone because they can’t defend themselves. What type of assholes are you?” Emma huffed.

“Why are you defending her? Has your little magic adventure led to something a little more than just friendship?” Leroy took a long look at Regina’s noticeable pregnancy.

Emma blinked. Why the hell do people keep implying that? “It doesn’t matter. I’m defending her because she saves our butts when she doesn’t need to. She’s not the Savior and she’s not a hero by your definition, but if something trying to kill us all pushed through that door right now, she’d be on it before anybody else and stopping it before the lot of you had time to pee your pants.”

“Can you not jinx us right now? I’m not sure if I would ‘be on it,’ after all.” Of course, Regina did the annoying finger quotes.

“Not helping. What’re you doing here, anyway? I would’ve gotten whatever you want,” Emma said.

“You need to take it easy. You’re in worse shape than I am,” Regina replied.

Emma scoffed. “It’s just a rash.” A rash that itched like hell, but a rash no the less. It would be gone within a few days according to Doctor Marshall, who was the Mills’ family general practitioner. He was in the same building as Doctor Alexander, who had directed her to the man when she called up looking for a recommendation to avoid going to Whale about her rash. The guy seemed on the up and up.

“That you were scratching last night like you wouldn’t care if you pulled your skin off,” Regina answered.

“Stop before you make us all puke,” Leroy commented. “Come on, Emma, we all know you two are plowing each other. You live with her for fuck’s sake. If that’s your kid in there, may the gods have mercy on you, but don’t act like we’re all crazy. You’re the crazy one having another kid with her.”

Regina growled and her hand flexed again. Emma took her hand and held it tightly in both of hers. She could feel hot flares from Regina’s body pour through her, so she tried her best to remain calm and hoped that somehow made it into Regina’s body.

“It’s okay. You go back to the office. I’ll get your order and bring it to you, okay? The longer you’re
here, the worse they're going to act until they provoke you and then everyone will blame you,”
Emma said.

Regina sighed. “Fine.”

Regina shoved away and held her head high as she managed to storm out of the diner despite the fact
that she definitely waddled now. She was also tinier, as she wore low heels or flats now. Emma
locked eyes with the dwarves and was tempted to arrest them for harassment, but David jumped in
before she did something irrational. He stared the dwarves down as well, but not with anger.

“I’m really disappointed in all of you. Regina has proven time and time again that she’s on our side
now and all you do is antagonize her. What are you trying to do, give her a reason to not be with us
anymore? She’s risked her life and lost her family for all of us. The least you can do is act grateful,”
David pointed out. His words did not seem to hit and might have been undermined by his gross rash.

“Hey, none of this would even be an issue if she hadn’t cursed us here in the first place,” Leroy
argued.

“Oh, yeah, it’s so horrible here. I mean, you get to be with Astrid, right? That has to be the worst,”
David snapped.

Leroy pointed a threatening finger at David. “You leave Astrid out of this.”

“Then you leave Regina alone and stop pointing out that she’s pregnant. Do you have any idea how
rude that is?” David huffed. Emma was a little stunned that not only did her father defend Regina,
but that he also seemed to defend this realm. He used to be all about getting back to the Enchanted
Forest, even if it meant leaving Emma behind. Now, not so much.

“Are you just sticking up for her because that’s really Emma’s kid?” Leroy demanded, pointing at
Emma.

“I’m sticking up for her because Regina’s my family now and she’s good family. So, if you have a
problem with someone in my family, you have a problem with me,” David said.

“You’re not that tough, you know?” Leroy pointed out.

“Maybe he’s not, but he’s not the only one who stands with family,” Emma said, moving to stand at
her father’s elbow.

Ruby stepped over, putting herself at David’s other side. “Yeah, he’s not.”

Leroy blinked. “You, too?”

“Yeah, me too. What the hell? I’ve seen Regina sacrifice more than anyone else in the name of our
safety in recent times, so yeah, me too,” Ruby answered.

“Thank you.” Emma folded her arms across her chest.

Ruby was not done yet, though. “I’ve also seen the pain her sacrifices have cost her and watched her
carry on to help us some more. How many of us would’ve been flying monkeys back in the
Enchanted Forest when the Wicked Witch decided to start in on us? Regina helped keep us alive
back then and it cost her a sister. Before that, it cost her a son. Hell, it cost her a family. So, yeah,
maybe it’s time to cut her some slack. And you definitely need to stop making fun of her weight.
Regina is pregnant and she’s beautiful and we know from Henry that she’s actually a good mother.”
“I still feel sorry for the kid and for the poor bastard that knocked her up.” Leroy stared Emma down. Emma did not break his eye.

“Well, good for you, but some of us actually think the kid did good. As did the other parent.” Ruby clapped Emma on the shoulder. Emma doubted Ruby thought she had knocked Regina up, but she seemed willing to keep up the facade, which was good. Emma would rather people assume she had somehow magically gotten Regina pregnant than them figuring out Regina carried Robin’s baby.

“Yeah, Regina’s not a bad mom,” a random customer spoke up.

“And she did stop the Wicked Witch,” another said.

“And she saved us from Pan.”

More people spoke up and the dwarves sank back into their booth. It did not seem they expected other people to join in. They did not have rebuttals for everyone else and just shut up. Emma wished she made enough money to buy everyone a round for standing up for Regina, but she was a simple public servant. It was good to know Regina spent her year in the Enchanted Forest touching others’ lives in a positive way. It would be nice to let her know the entire town did not hate her.

“I’ll be at the station if you want to talk about this,” David said to Emma and he left.

Emma winced. She was not sure what she would tell her father. It was not like she could lie to him and she had signed that damned confidentiality thing to make sure she did not reveal who the real father was. Well, she had from now until the end of lunch to figure it out.

“Lemme get Regina’s order,” Ruby said.

Emma sighed and sat down at the counter for a moment. A couple of people came by and patted her on the back, assuring her that she and Regina made a cute couple. Someone else thought they made good parents and would do a good job with the second kid, like they did with Henry. And then someone just congratulated her for “taming the shrew.” Emma groaned and put her head in her hands.

“Sounds like you have a fan club now.” Ruby chuckled as she came over with the takeout bag.

“These people are crazy,” Emma said.

“Everyone’s a little crazy. After all, you’re about to raise another kid with Regina and we both know magic didn’t have anything to do with it,” Ruby replied.

Emma shook her head. “I don’t think that’s crazy at all.” It was one of the few things that made sense to her. She took in the bag Ruby had. “Wait, did she order food?”

“She ordered lunch. She can do that, you know?”

Emma rolled her eyes. “Yeah, I know that. Duh.”

“It doesn’t seem like it. Yeah, she’s showing, but she can still walk and everything. Maybe you should let her every now and then. She seemed really happy to buy lunch for you,” Ruby replied.

Emma nodded. “Maybe I will, but you know, she cooks almost all the time, so I always feel the least I can do is get lunch.”

“Maybe you need to pick up more cooking then.”
Emma snorted. “Obviously you don’t know about Regina’s love affair with her kitchen. I’m lucking to get in when I can and usually I have to just start cooking before she comes home from work.”

Ruby laughed and winked at her. “Look at you, all domesticated. It’s cute.”

“Shut up. One day you’ll be there.”

“Nah, my lady is wild and free, just like me.”

Emma scoffed. “Uh-huh. Your lady picked you up from work the other day, so you could do laundry together.”

Ruby glared at her. “Don’t you have somewhere to be? You want this food to get cold? I bet that’ll piss Regina off more than rude dwarves. You shouldn’t keep a pregnant woman waiting.” Ruby all but pushed Emma out of the diner.

“So, I shouldn’t mention that time I called you and you two were cleaning the apartment together?” Emma chuckled.

“Bye.” Ruby gave her another shove and pretended to boot her in the butt.

“Well, I guess I do have a lunch date to get to.” Emma grinned.

“Stop acting like you don’t always have a lunch date. And don’t think I forget about that double date.”

Emma snickered as she left with the food in hand. She walked the short distance to Town Hall and went to Regina’s office. Regina looked up from her desk the moment Emma stepped inside.

“Did you at least destroy unnamed bastard number two for me?” Regina inquired.

“I think the town took care of that. After you left, other people inside the diner actually put the dwarves in their place. You’re fairly likable now. Like, if you ran for another term, you wouldn’t even need to curse people to win,” Emma remarked.

Regina snorted and rolled her eyes. “As if anyone would dare to run against me anyway. I see you brought lunch.”

“That you ordered. You were going to surprise me?”

“I would have liked to, but then those idiotic munchkins had to start something.”

“Well, it worked out, because, like I said, the town put them in their places. I doubt they’ll mess with you anymore,” Emma said as she sat down across from the mayor. “Now, what do we have here?” She dug out two takeout containers and held one up to her nose. “This smells like your special steak salad.” She slid the box to Regina.

“It is and when did they start making it special for me?” Regina inquired.

“Since I made sure you got spinach with it. I noticed you eat that more readily than any other vegetables, not that I can understand why. It is the grossest of all vegetables because you can’t put cheese on it.” It did not help that Regina sometimes put honey on it.

Regina shook her head. “Oh, so you don’t like any of the vegetables I make since they don’t have cheese on them?”
Emma chuckled. “That’s why I clean my plate every time you make food, right?”

“I figured you don’t want to insult me.”

“You’re probably the first person I would insult at this point and it’s nice to know you won’t take it personally.”

“No, I will take it personally, but just not in the way I used to. I understand we have always been able to say the truth to each other, but now it’s to better each other rather than put each other down.”

Emma nodded, as that made sense. “Yeah, that’s true. You didn’t have to get lunch, you know?”

Regina shrugged. “I know, but sometimes, I would like to do something nice for you.”

“Did you or did you not suffer through *Ernest Scared Stupid* with me last night?” It was glorious. Emma would have to get Regina to sit through more of her childhood favorites, especially while she had the rash as an excuse. *We’re going to watch all the Police Academy movies before this week is done.*

Regina groaned. “I don’t understand what you like about those movies.”

Emma smiled. “It’s just childhood stuff. I appreciate stuff like that, though. That’s something nice for me. Plus, you cook almost all the time. It’s easy for me to pick up lunch. I’m not saying I don’t want you to do it, but I want you to know I appreciate other little things you do.”

Regina nodded. “That’s good to know.”

Emma smiled more, happy she said something. They ate in silence for a little while. Emma dug into her grilled cheese, the perfect comfort food for her ridiculously itchy body.

“I’m not trying to say unnamed bastard number one was right, but you haven’t used your magic since you found out about the lump,” Emma commented. “Any reason why?”

Regina shook her head. “No, but I don’t feel very much in control of my body all the time. So, just like I can’t help feeling sick at certain smells, even at this stage, I don’t want to chance using magic and find I can’t control the strength of it or the intent or even the spell. Besides, I can’t be certain how the magic would affect the baby.”

Scrunching up her face, Emma frowned. “Could it hurt the baby?”

Regina waved the question off. “There’s plenty of theories on it. Some say yes, others no. Witches have written books on it, supporting whichever theory they experienced or witnessed. I don’t want to take the chance. It’s just like some unfortunate women who have their white blood cells attack the fetus as foreign entity.”

Emma’s mouth dropped open. “Holy shit, that happens?”

With a smirk, Regina’s eyes sparkled with mischief. “You’ve clearly done your research.”

Emma pouted and took a sip of her root beer. “I’ve done enough to know plenty of things about you and the baby.” She made sure to keep Regina in the loop and more often not, she was very aware she was more knowledgeable about what was going on than Regina was.

“I suppose.”

“Then, why did you get upset with me for not calling you about the plants? You wouldn’t have used
your magic on them."

Regina’s brow furrowed. “You truly are the idiot product of your parents’ idiotic genes. If I thought your life was in danger, I would use magic. There’s only theories that magic could harm the baby and anecdotal evidence, but something that eats people would waste no time harming you.”

Emma was not sure how she felt about that. She wanted to be flattered, but part of her took it as Regina being indifferent toward the baby. She would risk the baby if there was just a chance of Emma being hurt. That did not sit right with Emma.

“You don’t have to do that, though. I have backup and stuff. My dad and Mulan were at the top of their game and they always are,” Emma pointed out. *I’m usually the one out of sorts and just pull solutions out of my ass.*

Brown eyes focused on the desk for a long moment. “Part of me is actually jealous there are people by your side helping you. I understand it’s a good thing, but I feel… replaceable.” Her voice was lost in a mumble, but Emma got the message loud and clear.

Emma reached across the desk and took Regina’s hand, locking their fingers together. “You are far from replaceable. You are one of a kind.”

Regina met Emma’s eyes and smiled. “You are as well.”

Emma stuck her chin in the air. “Well, I am the product of True Love and all.”

“As is Neal and he’s nowhere near as arrogant as you about it.”

“Hey, according to the town, I knocked you up, so I think I earned my right to be arrogant. I, a woman, impregnated another woman. High five to me.” Emma high-fived herself.

Shaking her head, Regina sat back in her chair. “You’re such a child.”

“Could we play that off? Like this is my biological kid? Is this something that happened in the Enchanted Forest?” Emma asked.

“Every once in a while, but it required powerful magic on at least one of the women’s parts, usually the one who was going to impregnate the other. You have to be able to properly transfer your genetic material to your partner’s body, after all,” Regina replied.

Emma nodded. “Sounds complicated.”

“The spell is rather complex, which is why it did not happen very often. We can let people think that happened, but we cannot tell the child that.”

“Yeah, I know we can’t lie to the kid. I’m still feeling the sting of lying to Henry about his father. I feel like an asshole whenever he asks me little things about Neal.”

“You shouldn’t. Henry doesn’t really hold great expectations when it comes to stories about his father now,” Regina said.

Emma’s eyebrows knitted in close together. “Has he said something to you?”

“Sometimes, he just wonders how and why Neal left you. Sometimes, he realizes how much older Neal was than you and it creeps him out a little. He actually asked me once, ‘Mom, what’s with Emma and really older guys?’ He knows I wasn’t happy in my marriage to an older man, so he
wonders what’s your fascination with them.”

Emma balked. “It was just two! And I didn’t know Neal was that much older than I was.”

“I’m simply saying, you shouldn’t feel bad. Henry’s growing up and he’s starting to realize how complicated life sometimes can be.”

Emma nodded. “You’ve spoken to him about your marriage?” I’m sure she needs to talk to someone about it, but would she really go to Henry? She doubted it, but felt a little twinge that Regina had not come to her.

“Not really. He had a couple of questions during some quiet moments. He doesn’t understand why I’m reluctant to answer those questions or talk to him about it. I don’t lie to him, but I’ll tell him I don’t want to talk about it. It frustrates him, but there are just some things I don’t think he should know, especially about someone he’s related to, even if he doesn’t think that.”

“Maybe he’ll understand why he gets a little older.”

“I still won’t answer any questions about it.”

Emma nodded. “Can I ask you about it?”

“Why would you want to? He was your grandfather.” Regina turned her attention back to her salad.

Emma shrugged. “I never knew the guy. I just want to be there for you in any way I can.”

Regina sighed. “I appreciate that, I really do, but I don’t think I’ll ever want to really talk about it. I just want to forget that time happened. You can ask, but I’m not sure if I’ll answer. I’ve told Henry the same thing.”

“That’s fair. I know what it’s like to have trauma in the past, after all.”

A frown settled on Regina’s face. “I wish that wasn’t the case.”

Emma shrugged and a half-smile worked its way onto her face. “It made me who I am. It could’ve been worse. I don’t want to live in the past, especially since I’m with you.”

Regina smiled and sat up a little taller. “This would be sweeter if you’re face didn’t look like a pepperoni pizza.”

Emma laughed. “You think I’m cute. I look just like my dad.”

“Who also looks like a pepperoni pizza.”

“Speaking of dad, do you think he’ll buy that I’m the who got you pregnant?”

Regina scoffed. “Your father is an idiot, but he also knows how you are with magic.”

Everyone close to them knew how Emma was with magic. Ruby would probably be able to entertain and tickle herself with the lie that Emma was the “father,” but her parents would not be happy with that. “What should I tell him, then? He’s going to ask.”

Regina waved the whole thing off, even though they both knew she cared. “Tell him I don’t want anyone to know, as that’s the truth.”

Emma nodded. “Eventually, you’ll have to tell the kid.”
“I suppose, but we have a few years to figure out what to say to him.”

“This is true.” *Wait, did she say “we” like she’s including me or was that just a general thing?* Emma did her best not to hope. She did not want to put herself out there only to find out Regina spoke generally. She would only have herself to blame if her feelings got hurt. *But, she’s letting you name the kid. C’mon. That has to mean something, right?* Again, Emma figured it was better to be safe than sorry.

Lunch passed rather nicely after that, as their lunches tended to. Emma’s phone buzzed every couple of minutes. The first time it happened, she checked, thinking it might be Henry or an emergency, but when she saw it was her mother, she had a good feeling what it was about.

“Oh, sweet, merciful Hell, your mother just texted me,” Regina said.

“Good for you. My phone buzzing a hole in my pocket is her texting me every thirty seconds,” Emma replied.

“Want to bet dinner whose office she turns up first?”

Emma shook her head. “So, I can risk having to watch you eat pineapple, hamburger pizza? I mean, it was one thing when it was just pineapple and I’ll even take the Hawaiian style because it’s a thing they make, but now you’re just making up your own disgusting things.”

“You haven’t even tried it.”

“Because who’s dying to try pineapple and hamburger together? Not to mention, you dipped it in barbecue sauce.”

“I dip everything in barbecue sauce.”

“Because you’re gross,” Emma stated. There was no way around it. Pregnancy made Regina gross.

“If people can put hot sauce on pizza, I can dip it in barbecue sauce.”

Emma had nothing for that. So, she glared at Regina, who looked very too triumphant. All too soon, she had to go back to work, but hardly made it out of the building before she got more unwanted company.

“Are you kidding me, Swan?” Hook screamed, meeting her at the door of Town Hall.

“I don’t have time for this, Hook,” Emma said. She would have enough to deal with when her mother finally caught up to her.

“I knew there was something between you and the Queen, but she’s carrying your child? Are you kidding me?” He still spoke at the top of his voice.

Emma snorted. “And what’s it to you, Hook? We’re not together anymore. If I knocked Regina up, that’s between me and her.”

He grabbed her by the elbow and Emma growled. She yanked her arm back and pushed him. He stumbled a bit on the stairs, but maintained his balance. She glared at him.

“You listen to me, you arrogant piece of flotsam, we’re through and if you touch me again, I’m arresting you for assault on an officer, after I break your damn nose,” Emma promised him.

“Love,” Hook said, pouring on that charming smile that really made her want to break his face. *Does
he think I’m so easy? And, her brain just could not let that one go. Well, you were.

“Listen, I’ll say it in lingo you might be able to pick up on. I’m not some jetsam you can pick up out the water and lay claim to. I’m not some pretty little mermaid you can play with. We’re done. I’m obviously with Regina now. What the hell don’t you get about that? Are you so freaking arrogant that you don’t think a woman could walk away from you? Well, watch my smoke.” Emma turned and stormed off. She could see a serious arrest in his future.

-8-8-8-8-

Emma returned to the station to find David talking with Mulan. Mulan looked just as bad she and David did. They watched her as she made her way to her desk and she had an inkling they had come up with something she would not like. She counted herself lucky that her mother was not there. Oh, maybe Regina got that visit first. She did not envy Regina if that was the case, but she was happy it was not her.

“I’m just going to assume you’re talking about me and Regina,” Emma said.

“I heard rumors of the Queen’s pregnancy, but David told me it caused a ruckus at the diner and it was finally spoken out in the open,” Mulan commented.

“The dwarves seem to have a problem with her being pregnant,” Emma replied. “Someone called you as backup?”

Mulan nodded. “They did, but by the time I got there everything had cooled down and I came here.”

“We need to get you a car,” Emma said.

“I don’t have the money for one,” Mulan pointed out.

“Couldn’t she use a cruiser?” David asked.

Emma shrugged. “That sounds like a Regina question.” Yes, Mulan could have a cruiser for work, but she was not sure if it was all right for Mulan to use it during personal time. Beyond that, she needed the budget for another cruiser.

“Speaking of Regina, again, so…” David grinned and wiggled his eyebrows. “Did you do that?”

Emma scoffed. “Do you really believe I did that?”

David laughed and puffed out his chest. “I’d like to think you did, but I’ve also seen you turn your hair green while practicing magic.”

Emma’s jaw dropped. “Don’t you dare mention that to Regina!” It had only been for a moment while they fought the killer plants. She had hoped no one saw it, but, of course, her father would see it and have the bad manners to bring it up.

“When would I have the chance?” David pointed out.

“I’m sure you might find it,” Emma said. It was not like it was beneath either of them to tell Henry embarrassing things about others when they were bonding with him. Henry would then have no problem telling his mother.

“Wait, does Regina’s pregnancy have anything to do with Marian’s marriage falling apart?” Mulan inquired.
Emma shook her head. “Not that I know of.” That marriage was doomed with or without the baby. “Why would it? It’s not like Robin’s been the perfect husband. He couldn’t even break her curse and now he’s trying to blame her for that, claiming she’s not actually Marian.”

Mulan nodded. “This is true. I’m sorry.”

“Don’t be sorry. You’re Marian’s friend and you want to defend her. I’m sure if you ask Marian about it, she’ll tell you. I’m not going to say Regina doesn’t factor in because that would be stupid, but I know it has to be more,” Emma replied. She was happy Marian had Mulan at her side to get her through all of this.

Mulan continued to look contrite. “Still, I shouldn’t have made that sound like an accusation, especially if it is your child.”

Emma screwed up her face. She wanted to say it was her child, but she did not want to give Mulan the wrong idea, especially if Marian told Mulan the truth. Mulan needed to be able to trust Emma as both her friend and her boss.

“So, who’s saving me when Mom shows up?” Emma asked.

“I’m stick around just for the fun. You’re lucky your mom is having trouble finding a babysitter. She doesn’t want to have Neal out in case she gets too excited,” David explained.

Emma sighed. She knew that was not a long reprieve. “You think she’ll go see Regina first?”

“That seems possible, but she didn’t say anything to me. She just said she was looking for a babysitter. I could see her going to see Regina first. They haven’t seen each other much recently. Your mom’s busy with Neal and Regina’s busy being mayor, I guess,” David said.

Emma almost said Regina was busy being in denial, but she did not want to field those questions. She just hoped Regina got to get interrogated first. She needed time to prepare.

“You think I could use the rash as an excuse to not have that conversation?” Emma asked.

“Nope. She got used to it with me and she knows Regina took care of you through the whole mess. You’re screwed,” David replied.

Emma’s face fell. “You’re the worse help possible when it comes to Mom.”

“Uh, yeah, I have to go home with her at the end of the night. That’s not something you have to worry about anymore.”

Emma laughed. “Thanks for not making a thing out of that.”

“There wasn’t a reason to. You got to be close to Henry and you’re helping Regina. Now, you’re apparently impregnating Regina.” David snickered.

Emma sighed. What was she going to tell Snow when she finally managed to storm the station? She did not have time for the headache.

-8-8-8-8-

“Two hours with your mother demanding to know when we were going to tell her!” Regina fumed, pacing the kitchen. She had slice of pie in one hand and a cup of hot chocolate next to her. Emma decided to join her in both. They bribed Henry with the same to keep him in his room.
“Calm down, Regina,” Emma said.

“Calm down? You avoided this! How the hell did you avoid this?” Regina glared at her, as if it was her fault.

“Uh… you’re the pregnant one.” Emma thought that was obvious.

Regina sighed, hand to her forehead. “I cannot take dealing with your mother. She had all of this advice and things I should do and eat and what would make me comfortable and so many other maddening things.”

Emma caressed Regina’s face and gave her a soft kiss, tasting the delicious pecan pie. Regina did not complain, kissing her back, despite the fact that Emma still had her rash. In fact, Regina leaned in more and Emma had no problem giving her just that. They jumped apart when Emma’s phone went off.

“If that’s your mother,” Regina growled.

“You know it is,” Emma replied and answered the phone. “Hi, Mom. What’s up?”

“I’m at the door. Open up,” Snow replied.

Emma’s eyes went wide. “Mom’s at the door.”

Regina groaned and looked at the ceiling. “Does it never end?”

“Take a gulp of hot chocolate and let’s get this over with. Just know that I’m an awesome father,” Emma remarked.

Regina groaned again. “You’re lucky you’re cute.”

Emma laughed. “If only that’d save me from my mother.”

They went to let Snow and David in. Apparently, Ruby decided to babysit. She also sent a couple of rude texts to Emma while Snow proceeded to lecture Emma and Regina about what to expect from “their new baby.”

The night did not go as bad as Emma expected, mostly because her mother was more interested in making sure the pregnancy was going right. She spent over an hour telling Emma what she needed to do for Regina and David just backed Snow up, like the enabler he was. Emma decided to take it, just to keep the heat off of Regina to make sure she did not get too stressed. Besides, her mother did not seem to hear her whenever she said she knew pretty much everything her mother wanted her to do.

“Mom, thanks. We’ll handle it,” Emma said, hoping to get her mother out of the house. Regina had already exhausted every excuse she had to get up and walk away every time the word “pregnant” or “baby” escaped Snow’s mouth.

“Well, you know you can ask us anything you need to. We’re ready to help,” Snow said, motioning to her and David.

“We know.” Emma stood, hoping her parents got the hint. David did and stood up, so Snow followed him. Emma sort of corralled them to the door. She sighed as soon as they were gone.

“You’d think we were the idiots from the way they talked to us,” Regina said.
“Hey, be nice. My parents are happy for us,” Emma replied.

“Which might actually make it worse.”

“Just be happy they didn’t ask who the father is.” Emma assumed that was from her parents trying to respect her boundaries and let her approach them about things to avoid pressuring her.

“I will count my lucky stars,” Regina deadpanned.

Emma smiled. It was not that bad, but Regina was always annoyed when it came to Snow, even if things were okay between them. Emma went and embraced Regina.

“How about I make it up to you? You can have another slice of pie while I enjoy my own slice of pie,” Emma suggested with a grin. She did not have to say it twice. Either Regina’s really stressed by this or she’s not as grossed out by the rash as she pretends. Eventually, Emma would have to figure out which it was.

Next time: Emma gets to deal with her parents more.
14: Professionalism

Emma’s rash was finally gone after a few days and she managed to talk Regina into a lunch date at Granny’s diner since it seemed like many people were okay with Regina. The town was very aware of Regina’s pregnancy, so there was no need for her to hide, not that Emma thought Regina was hiding, more like ignoring. As it turned out, the town had mostly been ignoring Regina’s pregnancy, too. Yeah, they gossiped about it, some noticing the weight gain several weeks ago, but they were good at not getting caught for once. She just hoped the town could keep that up. She also hoped people did not congratulate them while they ate.

“I don’t see why we can’t do this at my office or in the station,” Regina commented as they sat at a table in the corner by the front window. There were a few glances, but everyone carried on with their business.

“Because every now and then we might need to be seen in public together without you killing any other unnamed bastards or some Big Bad showing up trying to kill the lot of us,” Emma remarked. “Plus, it’s a nice day.”

Regina did not argue with that, which made Emma smile and sit up straight. Ruby came over and smirked at them. Regina scowled, but did not say anything. Emma had to hide her own smirk, but since she used the menu, she had a feeling Regina knew.

“I’m going to be nice and just do my job,” Ruby said, but she looked like she was going to burst. There were eyes on them, waiting to see what they all might do. They probably just needed an excuse to start talking.

“Thank you for your professionalism for once,” Regina sniffed.

“But, I will remind you both you owe me a double date,” Ruby said.

Emma looked at her wrist. “Professional for all of three seconds. A new record for you.”

Ruby smiled, but managed to keep any other comments to herself. She took their orders before she walked off, seriously not saying anything beyond what the specials were. It would have been awesome, since the whole diner followed her lead and acted like it was a regular day, since it was, but then disaster happened. Goddamn Robin Hood walked in, holding Roland’s hand.

Roland spotted them first. The kid might have radar or something. “Regina!” His whole face lit up. Emma was not sure what Regina did with Roland for the time she had been in his life, but it had to be something beyond magic from the way he looked at her.

“Regina,” Robin gasped in a sort of breathy tone, like Regina was his lord and savior. Emma wanted to vomit. But, then again, I feel like I sound like that when I call her name.
“Robin, do not come over here,” Regina replied, even though Roland charged her. Emma was about to throw herself in front of the kid, wanting to protect the baby, but Regina held up her hand. “Roland, I need you to be careful.”

Roland stopped right in front of Regina. She smiled at him as he grinned at her and hugged her. She pushed his hair out of his face and he giggled as he stepped back. Emma was convinced all children’s laughter was magic.

“You continue to be so handsome,” Regina said and ran her finger down his cheek. Roland threw his shoulders back and looked so proud.

Robin approached despite orders not to do so. “I need to talk to you.”

Regina did not even deign to look at him. “There’s nothing for us to discuss. Carry on. I’m trying to have lunch with Emma.” Regina motioned to Emma, as if she was hard to miss.

Emma glared at Robin, but Regina kept her attention on Roland. He continued to smile, especially when Regina caressed his cheek again. Emma’s heart thumped in her chest, imagining Regina doing that with their kid.

“We can have lunch together, right?” Roland asked with an eager bounce.

“I’m sorry, sweetie, but I can’t have lunch with you today because I’m already having lunch with someone,” Regina said.

Robin interrupted before Roland could even say anything. “Please, just a few minutes of your time,” he begged.

Regina still did not even look at him. “You already had a few minutes of my time. You’ll get no more.”

“Surely you don’t mean that. We’re soul mates,” Robin said.

Regina cocked an eyebrow, glancing up at him. “Are we soul mates now because the whole town knows of your impending divorce or merely because I told you some pixie dust told me that before?”

Emma held in a flinch. Regina did not hold back. Like her pregnancy, the town knew about Robin’s divorce, but Emma had not heard anyone openly talking about it. Regina mentioned it like it was the weather.

“Regina, I love you,” Robin said.

Regina growled and her eyes ignited. “No. No, you are not allowed to come over here while I’m basically on a date and throw around such phrases. We are done and there is nothing to discuss. You made your choices. Now live with them.”

“Regina,” Robin said. Emma was about to escort him to the door. She could not and would not allow Regina to get worked up, especially over this chump. But, an unlikely savior showed up before she moved.

“Hey, pal. I think the lady said she’s on a date. Maybe you should leave her be,” Leroy of all people said as he and the dwarves stepped over.

“Yeah, leave ‘em alone,” another patron said.
“They’re on a date. Don’t be rude,” a woman scolded Robin, wagging a finger at him from across the diner.

“Let ‘em have their time together,” some guy barked.

Robin looked around and then turned puppy eyes to Regina. “Regina.”

“You heard them, Robin. I’m on a date with Emma. I don’t want to talk to you. Now, walk away,” Regina ordered, dismissing him with a flick of her wrist. No magic, just done with him.

“Yeah, walk away.” Leroy put his hand on Robin’s shoulder to direct him away.

Emma and Regina watched the dwarves led Robin away. Regina blew Roland a kiss, which made him grin and he chased after his father. Emma was shocked, but not to the same degree as Regina, who stared around the room as if she had no idea where she was. Emma knew people shamed the dwarves for their treatment of Regina, but she did not think the reprimands would get to them to this degree, where the dwarves would stand up for Regina. Emma was proud of the town.

“That was surprising,” Regina admitted.

“It was, but it was a nice surprise,” Emma said.

Regina nodded. “They’re actually… all right with this.” She motioned between them, but Emma knew she really wanted to just rub her belly.

Emma smiled. “Yup. Some people even think you did an awesome job with Henry and this kid is lucky to have you.” She reached over and caressed Regina’s stomach without a thought. Amazingly enough, she did not lose her hand at the public display.

Regina shook her head and took Emma’s hand. “No, it’s lucky to have you.”

Emma smiled back. It felt good to be in Regina’s good graces again. It was even better to know people were protective of Regina. It meant she would not have to worry about people badmouthing Regina to the baby when the baby was born. They could be a normal family. Well, normal for Storybrooke anyway.

-8-8-8-8-

Emma sat at her desk at work, looking at swatches rather than doing her paperwork. She and Henry had narrowed down the colors they wanted for the nursery, after thinking they had it, but changed their minds at the last second. Once they decided between the four they had, she would buy the paint tomorrow and they would get to work over the weekend. She would also try to convince Regina to go shopping for a crib and other things before she was too far along to do that kind of shopping. And, considering Regina’s size at the moment, any kind of walking might prove difficult for her in a few short weeks.

“Dad, which of these do you like better?” Emma held up the mint green, pale yellow, turquoise blue, and melon swatches.

David squinted from his side of the room. His rash was still present, not as bad as before. Emma was happy she had not gone to Whale. “Those are some… gender neutral colors.”

Emma laughed. “That was very diplomatic of you.”

“I’m learning to be that way when it comes to Regina. What’s she having?”
“Is this what you two do at work?” Snow asked as she marched into the station, pushing Neal in his stroller. He was out like a light. She eyed the swatches. “That’s a pretty blue.”

Emma sighed, glancing at the blue. “Yeah, it was the one that distracted me and Henry from our original choice of teal. Then, he saw the yellow and liked it and I saw the orange and we messed ourselves up pretty good.” Even though they had their hearts set on the teal, Emma was almost certain she and Henry would bend for the turquoise. It would look nice with a white and possibly splashes of their original teal or the light green that caught their attention.

“So, you’re both going to work on the nursery together?” David asked.

“Yeah, he thought it would be good bonding for us, not just together, but with the new baby, too,” Emma replied.

David grinned and leaned back in his chair. “That’s a pretty smart kid there.”

“Don’t try to take any credit. Regina swears all our genes are the butt end of stupid and she’s the reason he’s so smart,” Emma remarked.

David guffawed. “The butt end of stupid.”

“Things like that would only prove her theory for her, just so you know,” Emma said, even though she laughed right along with her father. I wonder if I could get her to say “butt end.”

“I think it’s wonderful you’re so interested in Regina’s pregnancy. I was wondering if we could take a little walk to talk about it some more, and maybe come to a decision on your swatches,” Snow said.

“I’m sure you’ll be a better help than Dad and his ‘those are some gender neutral colors.’ What was that?” Emma asked.

“Hey, can’t a guy make an observation? In the Enchanted Forest, you could only find out those things through magic, so I just figured she’d want to do it since it’s so much easier here. Clearly I’m wrong,” David replied.

“Maybe we wanted something a little less traditional,” Emma pointed out.

“And maybe I like tradition,” he countered.

Emma waved her father off and decided to join her mother for a walk. She owed Snow a conversation about everything anyway, even if Snow worked Regina into a funk last time she talked about the pregnancy. Snow had been pretty patient with Emma through everything, especially with her unofficially moving out of the apartment and the rumors going around that she was Regina’s “baby daddy.”

“It’s nice today,” Emma commented. It was about time. It took too long to get warm in Maine.

“It should be. Summer’s right around the corner. So, how are you doing?” Snow asked.

Emma shrugged. “I’m okay in general, if that’s what you mean. I’m actually really excited over this baby.” She knew that was what Snow wanted to talk about, so she would give her the in. Besides, she wanted to talk about the baby with someone besides Henry. Regina was having a baby, after all!

“I’m surprised by that. I thought you’d be hurt about Regina having someone else’s baby.”

With an exaggerated pout on her face, Emma’s shoulders slumped. “Ah, so you don’t believe I’m the
“one responsible for that?”

Snow laughed. “Emma, I’ve seen you do magic. You have great potential, but we both know you’re not trying to get there. Magic’s something foreign to you and you’re not very comfortable with it.”

“That’s quite true. You know me pretty well, you know?” Emma gave her mother teasing smile.

Snow smiled. “I try, you know.”

“You sound like you knew I had feelings for Regina before this all happened, too.”

Snow nodded. “I’m not blind, Emma. I could see the way you two danced around each other. I wasn’t sure what it was at first. I was willing to believe friendship and coparents and all of that. But, things boiled down to the two of you just a little too much. You’re both always a little too willing to jump in front of a bullet for the other. There aren’t many people I’d do that for. In fact, the only person I’d do that for that doesn’t carry bits of my DNA is your father, and probably Ruby.”

Emma rubbed her forehead. “We have this connection. I can’t explain it.”

“I know what it’s like. I was drawn to your father when I first met him. Yes, it was mostly making fun of him, but there was something there. Like I said, with Regina, I thought it might have been a friendship for you. After all, if we’re lucky, we go through life forming deep connections with other people. They don’t always have to be romantic. I mean, I clicked right away with Ruby as well and neither of us felt anything beyond sisterly feelings toward each other.”

Emma nodded. “I think Ruby just has that type of personality.”

“That’s true, but Regina doesn’t have a personality close to that… anymore anyway.”

Emma let out a loud gasp. “Oh, you mean once upon a time Regina wasn’t the prickly little grump I’ve come to like sacrificing my life for?”

Snow snickered. “When I met her, she was very friendly and warm. The kind of person who’d hug you as a greeting, who small children would flock to, and whose smile would fill you with joy. I hate to think she may never get that back.”

“She’s not as giving with it, but it’s still there.” I see it all the time, feel it all the time.

Snow nodded. “You’re right. So, you’re excited about the baby, which is good since a lot of people seem to think the baby’s yours. I’m assuming she’s letting you coparent this one as well.”

With a nod, Emma smiled. “It seems that way. We haven’t really talked about it. She has agreed I can name the baby.”

Snow beamed and clapped. “Oh, Emma, that’s excellent news! I knew I was right when I told the dwarves not to badmouth your family.”

Emma’s heartbeat increased at the mention of “your family.” That was her family and her mother protected it from the dwarves. How awesome was that? But, she knew there was more to this that she did not get. “I feel like this is some Enchanted Forest crap that’s going over my head.”

Snow put on a stern face and wagged her finger at Emma. “It’s not crap, Emma. It’s just an acknowledgment of your status as the other parent. In the Enchanted Forest, fathers named the babies. Or, you know, on the rare occasions, the non-pregnant parent. There’s a whole ceremony to go with it, which you probably won’t do since you think Enchanted Forest things are ‘crap,’ but it’s
still huge. She’s giving you a big role in the baby’s life.”

Emma felt happiness swell within her and she puffed out her chest. “Okay. That sounds good.”

“I never would’ve thought Regina would be so open with someone again. Are you as open with her?”

Emma sighed and scratched the back of her head. “I’m trying. I screwed up a couple of times, but she was actually there for me and reassured me and everything.”

“That’s good, Emma. We’re family. It’s okay to make mistakes,” Snow said. For all of the times her mother put her foot in her mouth or said something annoying, these words made up for it.

Emma nodded, hooking her thumbs through her belt loops. “I just have to learn from them.”

“Life’s learning process. I’ve learned a great deal since I met you and I’m still learning from you. I think the same could be said of Regina.”

“I hope.” As was the curse of being Snow White’s child. “You’re really okay with this, huh?”

Snow nodded. “I’ve had time to adjust to all of this. I want you to be happy and Regina makes you that way. I want her to be happy, too. I know she’s done a lot, especially to me, but underneath it all, I still remember the girl who saved my life on that horse, the stepmother who was kind to me, and I still love her. Sometimes, I even think she loved me.”

Emma sighed and part of her hoped that was true, for her mother’s sake and for Regina’s sake. She could not fathom what it would be like to be consumed by complete and total hate like the Evil Queen seemed to have been and yet somehow still pretend to mother the object of her hatred. It did not seem humanly possible. Or something only a true psychopath could do and despite meeting the Evil Queen and dealing with wacko Mayor Mills, Emma would never admit Regina was a true psychopath.

“Now, what’s up with the gender neutral swatches? Does Regina really not want to know the baby’s gender?” Snow asked, taking the conversation in a direction Emma could handle.

Emma shrugged and blew out a breath. “She seems really indifferent to the whole situation. At first, I thought it was because of how she felt about Robin. Were they close in the Enchanted Forest? She told me he was kind of annoying and she wasn’t really interested.”

“That sounds accurate. She was rather enamored with Roland, which I guess is partly because Henry was gone. She spoiled that little boy like he was her own.”

Emma laughed. “She probably still would if Marian let her.”

“She wasn’t a fan of Robin Hood, though. She liked pointing out he was thief and therefore not to be trusted.”

Emma frowned. “Sounds like she was talking about me behind my back.”

Snow chuckled. “I think that’s actually one of the reasons she disliked him. You started out as nothing more than a thief to her and we both know you wormed your way into her heart. At first, I thought she was scared he’d do that, but it became clear he was just getting on her nerves. For most of our time in the Enchanted Forest, Regina was only interested in protecting us and fighting off Zelena. It was a way for her to cope with you and Henry being lost to her.”
“Not a healthy way to cope.”

Snow’s face scrunched up as she scowled. “I’m not sure Regina knows a healthy way to cope.”

“Most people take up a hobby, Regina goes out to destroy people. At least this time she protected innocent lives.” It was good the pregnancy had not unsettled her to the point she went out to destroy people.

Snow nodded. “No, we could see a huge change in her in the Enchanted Forest. Yes, she still dressed like the Evil Queen, but it seemed more like she was in mourning this time around. She really missed you and Henry.”

She was probably in mourning the first time, too. “Did she ever say that?”

“She’d get angry if anyone ever brought you two up and try to console her. I mean all fireballs and threatening voice, but she never hurt anyone. She flung a few people across the room, but nothing to really hurt them. She just wanted to be left alone because she didn’t think we’d ever see you again.”

“Well, I’m happy she was wrong.”

“I’m happy you’re both happy. I never thought Regina would have a baby. I mean, not after before,” Snow said.

Emma arched an eyebrow. “Before? You mean before the potion?”

Snow blinked. “The potion?”

“Yeah, the potion.” Emma’s forehead wrinkled and stopped walking for a second. “Wait, you’re not talking about that. What are you talking about?”

Snow looked at her with wide eyes. “Oh, she didn’t tell you about it? About when she was married to my father and the baby?”

The baby? The fuck? “Okay, Snow, stop talking. I think you’re about to go into secret territory and we know what happens when you spill Regina’s secrets. I’ll let her tell me in her own time,” Emma said.

Snow gawked at her. “I can’t believe she hasn’t told you!”

“She hasn’t and you shouldn’t.” But, yeah, what the hell? Why hasn’t she told me whatever this is about?

Snow held up her hands in defeat. “Okay, okay. I won’t say anything. We don’t need any more blood feuds around here, especially with a baby on the way. No worries.”

Emma scoffed. “Yeah, no worries. I think we use a different philosophy around here.”

Snow shook her head. “I hope she tells you about everything, though. I think it’d give you more insight to her attitude. Let’s talk about something else. When are you doing a baby shower?”

“Do not throw Regina a baby shower. She already ordered me to keep you from doing it, so when you do it, I’m gonna get in trouble.” Emma pressed her hands to her chest.

Snow giggled, waving the request off. “Oh, Emma, I’m doing it. Regina’s getting a baby shower.”

Emma pressed her palms together. “Mom, please, don’t be this way. You know she’ll kill me.”
“She won’t. That’s the beauty of it. I get to do exactly what she knew I would and she’ll pretend to be upset with you, but she won’t be because she knew you wouldn’t be able to stop me in the first place. Emma, it’s the perfect crime!” Snow’s eyes actually sparkled.

*Only Snow White would think throwing a baby shower is the perfect crime.* “Mom, you’re going to get me killed.”

With a scoff, her mother waved her off. “Oh, don’t be so dramatic. How far along is she?”

“Why?”

“Because, here, traditionally the baby shower happens in the eighth month, but back in the Enchanted Forest we’d have them a little sooner than that, like the sixth or seventh month, with the hope of bringing the mother and child good luck through the rest of the pregnancy.”

Emma shrugged. “You’re on point then.”

“Emma, it’s done,” Snow said.

Emma groaned, knowing it was a wrap. Regina was having a baby shower and Snow White was planning it. Emma was pretty sure she would be done before the night was over. She just hoped before she went she learned what the hell Snow was talking about. Had Regina been pregnant before? She knew Regina could not have possibly have had a kid before.

“So, I really like the melon,” Emma said, hoping to get the conversation back on a better track. The swatches were important, even if she would not live to paint the nursery. At least Henry would be able to carry on.

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“I really wish we went with the melon,” Emma said as she and Henry popped the top to the turquoise they had been so distracted by. They almost did not go with it. Henry felt like it was too “boyish,” but he caved when she showed him images of other nurseries with the color. They went with the mint green as well, and would use it to highlight the room.

The extra room, which was another guest room, but was now the nursery, was bare, except for their supplies. They had moved out all the furniture together. Once painting was done, they had a couple of decals they wanted to put up, superhero symbols and Simba and Nala as cubs from *The Lion King* since it was one of the few Disney movies that had not come to ruin their lives. *Possibly because it’s based on Hamlet, but who knows if Shakespeare stuff is a thing around here, too.* Plus, Emma thought the decals would give the room a royal touch. The kid was a prince or a princess, after all. Then, there would be furniture to build.

“It was a nice color, but this one is better and it does go great with the green,” Henry replied as she poured the paint into pans.

“I guess. Let’s get started. We need to make a little progress before your mom comes in here to force feed us lunch.”

Henry snorted and rolled his eyes. “Yeah, because we’re going to fight her so hard.”

Emma laughed and they got started. For a while, they worked in silence. Emma still wondered what her mother meant yesterday about Regina’s attitude toward the baby being because of “before.”

“Henry, does your storybook have any stories about your mom when she was married to the king?”
Emma asked while making sure to roll an even coat of paint onto the wall.

“Nah. It all starts after she’s the Evil Queen and Grams is on the run from her. There’s, like, a prologue to let you know Mom killed Grams’ dad, but nothing beyond that really.”

“Did you see any books in the Apprentice’s house that might talk about Regina’s life before she was all high hair and black leather?”

Henry shook his head. “No, it’s weird. All the books in the house are blank. Maybe he stored the written stories somewhere else. Is there something you want to know that you can’t just ask her?”

“I’m not really sure what to ask, but I guess when I figure it out, I can do just that.”

“She’ll talk to you, you know?”

“I know, kid.” They were a forever family. She could talk to Regina. But, she did not want to ask anything that might trouble Regina or bother her more about the baby.

“Okay, just checking. I don’t want you to make another left when you should make a right. Mom isn’t going to always think that’s cute,” Henry remarked with a laugh.

Emma laughed. “Shut up over there and make sure your paint is even.”

“Rude.”

“You’re the rude one, calling me an idiot in a roundabout way.”

Henry smiled at her. “You know I love you.”

“And you’re emotionally manipulative.”

“I think you’re just easy. Don’t worry, Mom is, too.”

“Mom is too what?” Regina inquired as she poked her head into the room.

“Mom is trying to spoil the surprise is what!” Henry huffed and he frowned at Regina. “You shouldn’t be breathing in the paint fumes, either. Okay, so now you know what color we went with.”

“I don’t think that was much of a surprise. I heard you two debating over it from the past two days, after all,” Regina said with a bit of a smirk. “Anything special you want for lunch?”

“We want you to go away and then come back later after the room has aired out and act surprised,” Emma remarked.

Regina laughed, but she did just that to a degree. She returned with sandwiches for them and a salad for herself. She did them the kindness of acting surprised when she saw the turquoise and the mint green. Henry hugged her in appreciation. Her smile could have powered the town. They moved the gathering to Regina’s room to eat. Henry took the armchair while Emma camped out on the floor. Regina took the bed as it would be the easiest to stand up from.

“You know, when we finish everything, we do need to put a crib in there,” Emma said, wincing at how unsubtle she was. She took a huge bite of her sandwich to recover. Turkey, swiss, lettuce, tomato, and a perfect mixture of mayonnaise and mustard. She was in heaven. *How does she always know how to put the right amount of everything on a sandwich?*

“We’ll get to it. We have time. I’m hardly twenty-five weeks,” Regina replied.
“Yet you waddle with the best of them,” Emma said before she realized it. Her eyes went wide and she ate more of her sandwich. Regina glared at her.

“How does the turkey taste with your foot?” Henry asked with a snicker.

“I’m just going to eat now,” Emma enjoyed the turkey roll and kept her eyes on the floor for a while.

“A wise decision,” Regina stated.

Once lunch was done, Emma and Henry went back to work. Beyond painting, they put some of furniture together, just a couple of white bookshelves and a toy storage bench. A crib would wait for next weekend, after Emma convinced Regina to go buy one. Hopefully without insulting Regina at the same time.

“Hey, kid, are you sure you’re okay with this?” Emma asked as she worked the screwdriver, attaching two boards for a bookshelf.

“Emma, you don’t have to keep checking in on me. I’m fine with it,” Henry replied.

“I just want to be sure. I mean, I don’t want you to resent the baby or anything.”

“I don’t. I mean, yeah, I’ve had a thought or two about how it’s unfair that the new baby gets to have you both as parents for its whole life and all, but I have you now. Besides, I’m the one that brought you two together. That’s on me. That’s mine.”

Emma stopped and stared at him for a long moment. “How are you this mature?”

He scratched the top of his head. “Uh… I’ve been through a lot the past couple of years. Found a mom, lost a mom, found a dad, lost a dad, lost my memories, almost died. All kinds of things.”

Emma shook her head. “I’ve been through a lot, too, and don’t feel as mature as you.”

“You are mature, Emma. You just cope with things differently. Anyway, the point is, you don’t have to keep checking in. I’ve gotten over thinking of this baby as a replacement for me or even a symbol of you guys love for each other.”

Emma frowned. “You really thought that?”

“You admitted your feelings for Mom because of the baby. But, you know what, you had a chance to develop those feelings because of me. It might seem a little petty or self-centered, but it’s what helped me get through this and Archie said that was fine.”

“No, I agree, if that’s what helps you deal with it.”

“I’ve dealt with it. Now, I’m just ready to be a big brother. I’m happy for you and for Mom and for me. We get to be a family. I never thought that’d happen when I first went to look for you, but if I had a chance to wish on a star, I think this is exactly what I would go for, except you know Robin Hood being the biological father.”

Emma frowned. “Not a fan, huh?”

“I’m very much not a fan. Kids talk about how he yoyo’ed between Mom and Marian, which already isn’t cool, but knowing he doesn’t want to be there for his kid leaves a bad taste in my mouth. This isn’t about giving the baby its best chance, even though I do think you and Mom are that. He just didn’t want to deal with it. That’s not cool.”
Emma smiled. “Damn it, kid, you really are mature. I’m happy you feel that way. I know you’ll be a good guy when you get older, not that I had any doubt.”

Henry snorted. “I don’t have the genetic makeup to be anything else.”

“Uh, isn’t the Dark One your grandfather?” she teased.

Henry snickered. “I don’t think that counts. Anyway, I’m fine, Emma. But, I do want to talk to you about something.”

“Anything, kid.”

“Well, it’s about giving you a real title. I mean, you’re my mom and everything. I know I slip occasionally and call you ‘mom’ or ‘ma,’ but you need something permanent. I want you to know how much you matter every time I say something to you. I want this baby to hear that every time I have to talk to you, so when the baby starts talking the baby can call you the title, too.”

Emma’s chest filled with joy and she puffed up. “Okay. So, what do you want to call me?”

“I’d go with ‘mom’ if that wasn’t taken already. I’m too old for anything else, except for Ma. So, are you okay with me calling you Ma? Like I said, I know I slip sometimes and say it, but I never asked if you were cool with it or if it’s okay if I do it more often and on purpose.”

Emma’s throat tightened and her bottom lip trembled. She had not thought Henry would want to call her anything beyond her name once they got his memories back. She understood. Regina was his mom. Regina had been there for it all and she deserved it.

And, yeah, Emma knew he slipped up sometimes, but she always chalked that up to his second memories. She never put much stock in it, felt like it would only hurt if she did. But now, he wanted to call her that. He wanted to acknowledge she was his parent.

“You okay? I mean, if you don’t like it—” Henry was cut off.

“I love it!” Emma sniffled as tears leaked out of her eyes. She snatched him into a tight hug. He groaned, but hugged her back. “I just… I thought you’d… I mean, I didn’t think you’d want to call me anything after you got your Mom back.”

Henry patted her back. “Well, that’s the thing, you’re my mom, too. It’s just… I wasn’t sure what to call you. I mean, Mother’s way too formal, especially for you. And, I think if I switched and called Mom ‘mother,’ she’d die a thousand deaths.”

Emma nodded and released him with a content sigh. “You’re probably right about that.”

“So, you’re okay with being ‘Ma’? I mean, you know the baby is probably going to call you that. I don’t want to start a thing if you don’t like it. You got another one you want to try on?” Henry asked.

“Henry, I am honored to be your Ma.” She placed her hand on her heart.

Henry smiled. “And you are my Ma. I know we haven’t been together too long, but you’ve been with me through a lot and you’ve tried to do right by me and you’ve done right by me. I know it might take Mom a while to tell you, but you should know you’re doing a good job as a parent.”

Emma sniffled. “Thanks for saying so. And, yeah, your mom might not say it in words, but just her trusting me here with you and with the new baby let’s me know what she thinks. I just hope I can get
like her one day and show her how I feel through my actions.”

“I think you already do that much better than you do with words. We’re doing okay as a family, I
think,” Henry said.

“Well, are you happy?”

“Yeah.”

“And I think your mom’s happy and that makes me happy, so yeah, maybe we are doing okay as a
family,” Emma agreed.

Henry looked around. “But, we might wanna do better. This is a pretty sorry excuse for a nursery
and we only have a couple months left. Plus, have you and Mom considered doing like a baby moon
before the baby comes?”

Emma looked at Henry with a tilted head. “Boy, didn’t I tell you not to look up any pregnancy stuff
without me?” She lightly slapped him in the chest.

Henry laughed and backed up a step. “What? It wasn’t about the pregnancy and it was one thing! I
was just worried about you two not really getting time to date since you got together when there’s a
baby on the way. I know dating’s important to building a strong relationship.”

Emma grimaced. Where did we get this kid from? “Okay, Doctor Phil, I’m gonna need you to let me
handle this dating your mom thing. You worry about the big brother thing without looking up
pregnancy stuff, okay?” While they had not had a proper date, there were lunches and nights on the
couch together. Not to mention, the dinner she made as a first date. There was time together. Maybe
we should do something a little more. She needed to think what would be a good date that would not
cause Regina to look at her as if she had six heads when she suggested it. Maybe Ruby’s double date
would be cool.

“Fine, fine, fine,” Henry promised, but Emma suspected this was not the last bit of advice she heard
from Henry about dating his mother or even the pregnancy. He could not help himself, which he had
to get from his grandmother. Well, if Mom isn’t the death of me with her baby shower, Henry will
definitely pick up the slack and kill me with this other stuff. She might as well enjoy her family time
while it lasted.

-8-8-8-8-

Next time: Emma and Regina talk about their work plans for after the baby is born.
Parental Consent

Chapter Notes

I don’t own these characters. Disney/ABC does.

15: Parental Consent

“I can’t believe I let you talk me into this,” Regina grumbled as Emma helped her out of the car. Regina gave the key to a valet and glared at him the whole time, as a warning not to mess with the benz. Emma squeezed her hand to get her to stop before the poor kid peed his pants.

“Aw, you know you wanna go on a date,” Emma replied with a smile. They needed to get a real date in while they had the time.

Regina curled her lip. “Perhaps with you, but not with two of your friends.”

“Come on.” Emma grinned, putting her hand at the small of Regina’s back. “Ruby likes you and wants to get to know you. Plus, you love Tony’s. You can have some pasta and pretend to drink wine and have a good time.”

Regina rolled her eyes and continued to frown, but followed Emma into the restaurant. The hostess’ eyes went wide, but she wisely did not say anything beyond directing them to where Ruby and Dorothy were already seated at a table in the corner. Emma suspected Ruby asked for the table on purpose, so they would not have a lot of traffic going by. Ruby and Dorothy both looked nice. Emma was not used to seeing Ruby dressed up, but her little black dress was classy. Dorothy had on a suit and they made quite the dashing couple.

“Oh, you guys tried to out-dress us,” Ruby groaned as she and Dorothy stood to greet them.

“I think we succeeded,” Emma replied with a smirk. Regina, even though in a maternity dress, still looked amazing and Emma felt like she pulled off her own red dress fairly well.

“Well, best dressed pays for the meal,” Ruby remarked.

“Leave it to you to force me out on a date and then try to make me pay for it,” Emma commented.

Ruby snickered while Emma pulled out Regina’s seat for her. Once Regina was secure, Emma pushed her up to the table. Emma sat down and saw Ruby smirking at her.

“Make the trained joke,” Emma said, knowing it was coming.

Ruby opened her mouth and then closed it. She shook her head. “Too easy.”

Emma sighed and before she could fully recover, the waiter was on them. She could only wonder if the service at Tony’s was that good because it was so posh or if the waiter saw Regina in his section and did not want to be turned into a frog. He gave them the wine list and then smiled at Regina.

“We also have a wide selection of non-alcoholic beverages,” he said.
He seemed so friendly and almost adorable, but Regina probably would have strangled him with her bare hands if she could get up fast enough. Instead, Regina scowled and tried to kill him with her eyes. Emma took her hand and patted it, which did not get rid of the scowl.

“You guys have sparkling cider?” Emma asked. The waiter nodded. “Two.”

“You don’t have to,” Regina said.

Emma waved her off. “It’s not like I really drink wine, anyway, and I don’t want to embarrass us all by asking for the cheapest beer on the menu.” Ruby and Dorothy laughed while Regina smiled and her eyes brightened a little. Crisis averted.

Emma relaxed. The waiter left them menus. Tony’s was supposed to be a primer restaurant, so Emma was not sure what she wanted to try. Added to that, she was not sure if she could truly afford this.

“So, Regina, you’re Zelena’s sister,” Dorothy said.

Regina’s eyebrow ticked up. “Yes, is that a problem? I’m also a witch and you’re a witch hunter, last I checked.”

“No, it’s okay. Yes, I was a witch hunter, but I know like people, there are good witches and bad witches. Your sister was a bad one,” Dorothy said.

Regina rolled her eyes. “Preaching to the choir.” Emma gave her a pleading puppy look and Regina sighed. “But, that’s behind us. What do you do in Storybrooke?”

“Mostly manual labor. I didn’t get a set of memories to fit in here. Ruby’s been a great help.” Dorothy took Ruby’s hand and they smiled at each other. It was sickeningly cute. Do me and Regina look like that?

Despite the tense start, the date actually went fairly well. Ruby was careful to not mention the pregnancy and Dorothy followed her lead. Regina had plenty questions about their relationship, though, quite curious as to how they met, how Ruby ended up in Oz to meet Dorothy, and how Ruby remained friends with Snow.

“Did she really not realize what you meant when you said you were leaving?” Regina inquired.

Ruby snickered and shook her head. “I think Snow believes everyone is straight until they’re not. But, then again, I guess I’m guilty of it, too. I left here like there’d be no other bisexuals or lesbians or anything. Kinda stupid now that I think of it.”

“Yes, and a more intelligent friend would’ve told you that,” Regina said.

“You’re still pissed at my mother for her advice, aren’t you?” Emma teased. But, the second the question left her mouth, she cursed in her head. Now, she was stuck thinking about her mother said about “before.”

Regina’s expression fell into a deadpan. “I’m pissed your mother constantly proves useless.”

Emma rolled her eyes, but decided against saying anything. The evening was going too well. They had dessert, most of hers eaten by Regina. Of course, she ordered the slice of cheesecake when Regina could not decide if she wanted cake or a cannoli. Watching her eat the cannoli was more than enough as far as dessert went for Emma.
“Can I say something about that?” Ruby asked with a grin.

“If you want to explain modern sexual innuendo to your girlfriend, feel free,” Emma replied with a smirk all her own.

“Oh, I’ve explained plenty.” Ruby wagged her eyebrows.

“And I’ve done plenty of explaining on my own,” Dorothy said and then she took her first bite of oozing brownie. She moaned. “I think your chocolate is enough to stick around for. So good.”

“Believe me, I know,” Emma replied. She heard Regina enough well enough, after all. Dinner went so well, Regina picked up the tab and did not complain on the way home. Emma wanted to pat herself on the back. She would have to remember to tell Ruby.

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Emma and Regina were in bed. Regina was doing a bit of work while Emma was just enjoying herself holding Regina and caressing her stomach. She smiled. It was nice that Regina let her rub her stomach, even if Regina did not seem quite enthused about the pregnancy, even now. Emma was tempted to ask about that, but decided to ask something else on her mind. The day had gone too well for her to ruin it just yet.

“Have you considered how long you’ll go on maternity leave for?” Emma inquired. She felt like it was a topic they needed to broach, especially since Regina still wanted to act like everything was normal, like she had not put on twenty pounds and had a wiggling, growing organism in her body.

Regina remained focus on the documents in front of her. “Hmm?”

The noise itself was delicious and matters were not helped that Regina had on her “sexy” glasses, as Emma had dubbed them. It would not take much work to ease her hands under Regina’s nighty and have her way with the oh-so busy mayor. But, she was off track and after pregnancy plans were important. So, work plans and then sexy plans.

“Maternity leave. You know, when you have the baby. It’s not like you’re going to have the baby and then go right back to work,” Emma said and then her eyes went wide as she gasped. “Oh, my god, you were gonna have this baby and then go right back to work!”

Regina made a noise in her back of her throat. “No, I suppose not now. That’s not the way things are done here.”

Wow, she is really out of touch with this baby. “Nope. You get to, you know, bond with the baby and you don’t have to have a stranger look after your newborn. You took time off with Henry, right?”

Regina made a noise and squirmed a little. “Henry was different.”

Emma was not sure if that was because of the Curse or if there was something different from this baby and baby Henry. She decided to try another route. “I could take some time off, too. Maybe a couple of weeks or something. I don’t want to crowd you or anything.”

Regina sighed and turned to look into Emma’s face. “You’re literally cuddled up against me right now and you think you could crowd me?”

Emma pouted. “I just… I don’t want you to get sick of me or think I’m taking up your time with the baby. I definitely don’t want this to turn into the same situation we had with Henry in the beginning.
I mean, I know now that I approached that kind of wrong, but I don’t want to be on the wrong end of ‘my son’ again.”

Regina put her papers on her nightstand and cupped Emma’s cheeks. “There won’t be any of that because we’re a team now. You’re not trying to take this from me and I’m not trying to hold on too tight. Honestly, with the way Henry has been preparing for the whole event, I’m starting to think he might take the child to raise as his own.”

Emma snickered. “You know he went out and brought a ton of Captain America graphic novels to make sure he has something to read to the baby?” He seemed to be planning on reading material for the next few years, considering the collection she purchased in Boston for him and his latest spree.

“I wondered why he wanted the advance on his allowance.”

“Yeah, he didn’t like that the bookshelves were bare. I just went out and got Dr. Seuss books and a couple of Disney storybooks, which he declared boring. He’s really ready for this big brother thing. I’m proud of how mature he is.”

“I am as well.”

“Right, but back to the original question. How much maternity leave? If you don’t mind, I’ll take maybe three weeks with you since you won’t get sick of me, just to help around and you’re not alone with a newborn all day.”

“Do you think Mulan is really ready to be a full-time deputy without you there at all?”

Emma nodded. “Yeah, she’s good. Besides, if there’s a real emergency it’s not like they can’t call us. We should probably train another deputy, though. Not just for me being gone, but in general. These people need to learn to take care of themselves and I’m tired of working seven days a week on rather crap pay.”

Regina laughed. “Is that your way of asking for a raise?”

“Did it work?”

“Unfortunately, no.”

“I should’ve done it with a foot rub and a steak.”

“I definitely would’ve considered it a lot longer.”

Emma smiled. “Well, without the raise, we still need another deputy. Actually, we probably need a couple or more. We need a real law enforcement agency. There’s a lot of people here now and crime is on the rise as some people fall back into their old lives or decide to lash out at this life. I think another deputy couldn’t hurt.”

Regina nodded. “This is quite true. Do you have anyone in mind?”

“Maybe Dorothy. I mean, she hunted witches and we get a lot of magical problems around here.”

“True. Anyone else?”

Emma shook her head. “No, but I’ll talk it over with David. We can figure it out. Speaking of that, though, who is going to replace you while you’re out on leave?”

“I can work from home.”
“You’re going to stress yourself out. You know how it is to have a newborn around, after all. You’re going to worry about a newborn and the town?”

“I did it before.”

“When everyone was cursed and not much happened. Now, we feel like luck has smiled upon us if we make it a week without some magical calamity or someone trying to kill us all. You should have a deputy mayor or whatever they’re called. I’m really surprised you don’t. You don’t have, like, a minion you trust with that job?”

Regina laughed. “Oh, why would it have to be a minion?”

With a smile, Emma pretended to study Regina. “You didn’t think of them as minions? You seem like a minion kind of gal.” A blond eyebrow went up. “They weren’t mooks, were they? You had unnamed mooks?”

Regina let out a snort of laughter. “All of my mooks had names that I bothered to learn, I’ll have you know.”

“Well, surely there’s one mook worth upgrading, one who used to hang out in the shadow of the Queen for a while. Just someone you can trust to run the town and not start a civil war when you want to come back to work,” Emma said.

“I would just hand the job to your mother if she didn’t prove incompetent the first time.”

Emma snorted and pulled back a little, feigning offense. “She wasn’t incompetent. She was smart. Who wants to deal with these people all the time?”

Regina leveled a glare at her. “Are you trying to say something about me, dear?”

Emma grinned. “Never. Anyway, I’m being totally serious. This is something you have to consider. How long will you be gone and who’ll be in charge while you are? You don’t want to give the royals around here a chance to start fighting over the ‘throne.’ I’ve heard those guys talk and you would think monarchy was the natural state of humanity.”

“You only think it isn’t because you grew up here. If you had grown up in the Old World, you’d think monarchy is the natural state of humanity. There has to be a leader of the pack.”

“And yet you guys are totally afraid of werewolves.”

“Well, most wise creatures fear that which eats it. I’ll consider who will take my place for a few weeks.”

“Just weeks?”

Regina frowned. “Why? How long do you think I should be gone?”

Emma sighed. “I just thought you’d want more time to bond with the baby. Didn’t you like bonding with Henry? I know you wish you had more time.”

“Henry was different.”

Emma was tired of that answer already. “Why?”

Regina looked away and then turned all the way away. She was silent. Emma refused to let Regina shut down, so she gently pressed herself into Regina’s back. She kept her hand on Regina’s belly
and slowly stroked it. There were certain patterns that got Regina to purr. Emma did not understand why, but if she drew spirals with two fingers, Regina would mew and melt. *What if I’m doing magic on her? Nah, Regina would’ve said something.*

“Why was Henry different?” Emma whispered.

“It’s nothing,” Regina replied. Emma put a little more pressure on her spiral and Regina whimpered.

“You know you can tell me.” *Does it count as coercion if I do this with a pleasant touch?* Deciding she did not care, Emma made tighter spirals and Regina mewed and stretched for a moment. She kissed Regina’s shoulder.

Regina sighed. “It’s not something I want to discuss just yet. Just rest assured Henry was different. Everything was different.”

“And this isn’t different? I mean, just me being here should make this different, right? Am I not doing enough to support you in this?” *I just want to be here for her, for this kid, for our family.*

Regina turned around again and stared deep into Emma’s eyes. So much emotion swirled in those honey eyes. It reminded Emma of the times when Regina used to get in her face… or they got in each other’s face. It did not matter. There was just so much intensity there and it worked its way into Regina’s voice, burning in each word. “Never say that. You’re doing more than anyone has ever done for me. More than I ever thought imaginable. More than I’m sure I deserve.”

Emma swallowed, taking that all in. It settled somewhere in her bones, embedded itself in her soul. *I’m important to her.* Of course, she already knew that, but there was something about the acknowledgement right now that strengthened her. “So, this is different?”

Regina sighed. “It feels different, but I know better than to hope.”

“Regina.” Emma brought her hand up to run through Regina’s hair. “I’m here for you.” *Tell me.* She wanted her eyes to say what she refused. She wanted Regina to open up to her, but she did not want to beg for it. She did not want to pressure Regina.

“I know. And I thank you for that.”

Emma nodded. *Maybe if I open up, she’ll do the same.* “And I thank you for this forever family. This is beyond anything I ever imagined when I was younger.”

Regina’s forehead wrinkled. “You never considered you might have a family of your own?”

“Sometimes. I mean, I always thought if I had a kid, I’d do everything right. I do everything way better than any of my foster parents. But, that was when I was really little. Then, the truth hit, I had a kid and was far from capable of taking care of him. For a long time, I wondered if that was what happened to my mother. Was she some unwed teen with a jerk boyfriend who abandoned her and she was trying to give me my best chance?”

“Did the truth hurt more than that?”

Emma thought on it. “I’m not sure. I mean, once I calmed down and thought about it, I could see how they were trying to give me my best chance, especially considering the fact that David said your men pretty much killed him right after he got me into the wardrobe. But, then I think about how life sucked without them and how much hurt I went through. Honestly, there were times in the beginning with Henry when I wondered why a mom like you hadn’t wanted me.”
Regina’s eyes went wide. “You’re kidding. You thought I didn’t love him.”

Emma’s face scrunched up. “Sometimes and sometimes I was just humoring him. You know, the mayor’s kid, who was a little spoiled and thought his mom was some Evil Queen because she probably forced him to eat his vegetables or gave him a bedtime or something silly. I mean, I never lived in a mansion or had my own anything and Henry had stuff. You couldn’t be all that bad.”

“And then you found out I was.”

Emma shook her head. “It never took away from the fact that you were a good mother to my son. Maybe you were a horrible person to everyone else, but you were good to my son and I wanted someone to be good to him. No one who was supposed to be good to me ever was. Not to say I haven’t met nice people because I have. I’ve met some truly amazing people in my lifetime, but everyone who should’ve cared wronged me in some way. Yeah, it was wrong for you to let Henry think he was crazy, but there’s good stuff in there, too. Just like, yeah, it was wrong for my mom to let me go into some crazy new land as a newborn, but there were good intentions there and I totally understand the idea of not being able to let your kid die.”

Regina curled into her a little. “You know I would have killed you.”

“I might not have seen you at worst for more than a minute, but my parents tell stories and they’re certain you’d have killed me.”

“That was the plan, but sometimes I wonder. I would say I was at the height of my madness, but still, I wonder.” Regina caressed her cheek.

Emma’s brow furrowed. “You wonder?”

“I wonder if I would have held your tiny body in my arms and…” Regina shook her head. “It doesn’t matter. It didn’t happen and I’m quite glad. I prefer you like this.”

Emma laughed. “You just like my foot rubs.”

“They’re helping me make it through life right now. Standing has become quite tiring and I don’t want to imagine how swollen my feet would be without your touch. I don’t know how I’ll make it ten more weeks.”

“You’ll be fine. But, you’ll think about a replacement for a while, right?”

“I promise.”

“Good.” Emma beamed. “I want to do the stay at home mom thing with you. Who knows, we might get glimpses of what this kid’ll be like when he finally develops a personality.”

“You clearly don’t remember much about newborn Henry from your other memories. There was just a lot of sleeping, eating, and crying.”

Emma puffed out a breath. “That kid sure could cry, couldn’t he?”

Regina smiled. “It just made me love him more.”

“Yeah, I could feel that in the memories. It’s funny how I could almost feel the emotions attached to the memories. You panic a lot more than I could over things. You had me doubting myself a couple of times, feeling like I was underrating to a situation.”
“Well, he’s my most precious person.”

Emma rubbed her stomach again. “Got room for two more?”

Regina smiled and offered Emma a sweet kiss in response. Emma sighed and pulled Regina closer. It felt nice to share. *I’ll have to do that more. Maybe a little every night.* It would prove she was there to stay. Regina knew she would never open up to just anyone, after all.

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It felt like a normal day at the sheriff’s office. Emma showed Mulan how to fill out reports and how to bring files up on the computer. Mulan took to everything swimmingly. Emma was certain when it came time to take maternity leave, everything would be fine. She mostly worried about helping Mulan and David find other deputy candidates more than anything else as far as work was concerned. She pitched Dorothy and they decided to talk about it once they were done with their current tasks. David was doing inventory and then reality broke. Snow entered.

“Emma, what do you think of these baby games?” Snow shoved a list in her face.

Emma’s face scrunched up. “I don’t play baby games.” *I have other kinks.* But, she could not say that to her mother.

Snow giggled. “Not for you to play. Well, actually for you to play. They’re for the baby shower.”

“What the hell, Mom? I told you not to do a shower. Are you seriously trying to get me murdered?” Emma asked. Regina had not expressed any kind of desire to have a shower. Hell, there were days Emma was not sure Regina had any desire to have their kid. She shot down Emma’s suggestion to buy a crib four times already. Poor baby might end up sleeping in a dresser drawer.

Snow laughed. “You’re being dramatic. You knew this was coming and I know Regina knows it’s coming. I need to prepare. Now, tell me what you think about these baby games.”

With a sigh, Emma rubbed her temples. “Mom, she doesn’t want a shower.”

“Oh, so I suppose you’ve purchased diapers and a baby swing and a bassinet,” Snow held up a finger for each thing she named.

“We can get those.”

Snow just went on, making sure to keep going with the fingers. “A rocking chair, baby clothes, bottles, a breast pump, a play pen, baby books, blankets, toys—”

“We can get those, too.” As far as Emma knew, Regina was loaded.

“I talked to Geppetto and talked him into making a crib.”

“How did you know we need a crib?”

Snow smirked. “You think I’m alone in this?”

*Henry, you little traitor!* Emma threw her hands up. “All right, all right! I get it.”

“Do you really get it? Because this is happening. You can tell Regina to come see me if she has a problem with this. I didn’t get a chance to shower you with gifts when you had Henry, so this is my second chance.”
“Mom, this isn’t my baby.”

Snow had the nerve to roll her eyes. “Isn’t it? I’ve noticed you doing everything a doting parent would be doing and there’s no father around. You’re clearly the second parent. Don’t try to act humble. I’m sure Regina has said something.”

“Snow, this is Emma and Regina we’re talking about,” David called from the supply closet.

Snow sighed. “You’re right. Knowing you two, you probably haven’t even decided to be a proper couple despite living together.”

“We’re totally a couple. We get out on a date and everything,” Emma said.

“I know. Ruby said and the town’s been talking about it. It’s good that’s out of the way. Hopefully, you’ll both figure out you’re the second parent sometime before this baby’s in college. Now, regardless of what you say, this is your child and my grandchild. You can ask anybody on the street. I won’t have you or Regina keep me from throwing this baby shower. So, you better just pick some games and also be ready to bring Regina to the location once I have this all done.”

Emma’s face fell. “And by location you mean Granny’s.”

“It’s a good location.”

“As long as there’s something good to eat, I’ll do it. I need a decent last meal.” There was no way she would be able to talk her mother out of throwing the shower and they needed so many things for the baby. Emma knew from her false memories Regina had handled everything with Henry on her own and took care of issues as they came up, but that was when she was pretty much an island, isolated and no one on her side. They had people now. They should let people do for them, like they did for each other. They both had to get used to the idea that there were people there for them.

Snow grinned. “That’s the spirit. So, you pick some of these games and text me the ones you like. Also, text me whatever food you want and I’ll run it by Granny. I’m going to go register you.”

Emma twisted her mouth up. “There’s a place to register for a baby shower in Storybrooke?”

“The Second Curse upgraded us time wise. So, now we’re in real modern times rather than the 1980s… or late 90s in some aspects. I never really understood how time worked or didn’t work here during the Curse.”

“I wondered why there was a Whole Foods here now.”

“Yes, so I have a lot to do. I’m still trying to decide on a theme. Henry wanted to go with apples, as apparently that was a code word you two used when only you knew about this baby. I’m not sure apples would work and I’m not sure if everyone would feel comfortable with that. At first I wanted to do Disney Princesses because I thought it’d be cute with all of us, but that doesn’t help if the baby’s actually a boy. Henry, of course, wanted to do the Marvel Universe, which I thought was just silly. I’m leaning toward The Sword in the Stone. I remember you said you liked that movie and you watched it about fifty times with your brother before he could even grasp colors. I think Regina would like the idea of knights and kings and things. I’ll keep you updated and everything.” And just as quickly as she appeared, Snow was gone, as was any semblance of Emma’s sanity as she realized she just agreed to a baby shower.

“Regina’s gonna kill me!” Emma groaned and slapped herself in the forehead. A tiny part of her was flattered her mother remembered she watched the Sword in the Stone with the Lil Bit and how it held a special place in her heart, but beyond that, Regina was going to kill her.
“Surely this baby shower is not so awful. Your mother seemed very enchanted by the idea,” Mulan pointed out.

“Yeah, well, she’s not the one Regina’s going to kill. Regina basically ordered me to make sure my mother didn’t do this. But, she’s in full out mode right now, complete with a theme and everything. I don’t think a Big Bad could stop her.”

Mulan’s brow wrinkled. “Big Bad?”

“Oh, you know, like a Monster of the Week. The killer plants that turned out to just be from a magic accident were Monsters of the Week. A Big Bad is basically when everything goes to shit around here and then we find out it’s some villain trying to destroy life as we know it.”

Mulan nodded. “I think I understand. The Wicked Witch was a Big Bad.”

“Bingo.”

“Bingo?”

Emma shook her head. “Never mind that one. Anyway, I was supposed to stop this. Instead, I folded like a sweater. Regina’s not going to be happy about this.”

“It sounds benign enough, though.”

“It is. Well, provided we don’t get the theme my mother seems to want. I just don’t think Regina wants that much attention on her pregnancy.”

Mulan pursed her lips briefly. “Why? The town seems rather interested. There are people who believe you impregnated her and they’re quite happy with that. Very supportive.”

“Yeah, but then there are other people who have other ideas.” People were not as stupid as they liked to act and several townsfolk knew Robin was the father of Regina’s child. She was not too sure what their opinions were. She would have to check in with Ruby to find out what the gossip was, but then again, Ruby was probably busy hyping her mother up over the baby shower. Please, let Ruby and Henry nix this whole theme idea.

“Well, it doesn’t matter what anyone thinks, right?” Mulan asked.

“I think that, but like I said, Regina doesn’t seem to want anyone to know. Of course, it could be because she’s been trying her best to pretend she isn’t pregnant at all.”

Mulan frowned. “Why?”

Emma scratched her head. Because of “before.” Whatever the hell that means. “I’m not sure, but let’s just drop it. The last thing I need is for Regina to waddle in here thinking I’m talking about her with you. She’s managed to skip most of the mood swings, but she’s not totally above them, which is weird. Regina used to be a walking mood swing, but now she’s almost rational.”

Mulan chuckled. “Maybe the pregnancy agrees with her, even if she’s not trying to admit it.”

Emma smiled and she could feel it border on goofy. “I think it agrees with her. She’s beautiful.”

Mulan snickered. “You’re… what’s the phrase I’ve heard Ruby use? Oh, gone on her.”

“Ruby thinks everyone’s gone on everyone.”
“Sometimes, she’s not wrong.”

“I suppose.” Emma smiled a little more. *Yeah, I’m totally gone on her.* “What about you? You’ve been around here for months. You finally seeing someone?”

Mulan shrugged. “I’m just trying to get myself settled in the best I can here and help Marian. It is hard for her, especially since Robin has decided to openly pursue women in town.”

Emma frowned. “He what?”

“He told her that he’s allowed to pursue other women since she wanted to go ahead with these ‘silly’ proceedings. She tries to pretend it does not bother her, but I know it hurts. This was supposed to be her True Love and he’s cast her aside, tried to punish her for daring to look for happiness and trying to blame her for their problems by accusing her of not being who she is.”

Emma shook her head. “Is it just me or is that guy a major asshole?”

Mulan sighed. “I feel as if something inside of him is broken. Perhaps Marian’s death had something to do with it, but that does not excuse his behavior.”

Emma nodded. “You’re right. You know if you need anything, I’m here.”

“I know. Thank you. You’ve already done so much. Marian’s enjoying her job.”

“That’s good, but you can thank Regina for that, not me.”

“I know you spoke to her for her to do anything. So, thank you.”

Emma squared her shoulders. “No problem. Let’s get back to this. I have to show you how to do these things since I’ll be dead before the month is over.”

“Stop being dramatic!” David called from the closet.

“Just keep going over those supplies. The last thing we need to do is be short of anything when mutant, zombie bears decide to attack,” Emma remarked.

“We’ve got bear mace and also zombie repellant. Which one would we use for that situation?” David wondered aloud.

“I think we’d have to try both and see what works. Anyway, you’re distracting me.”

“I’m distracting you from being a crazy person who doesn’t know she has a second child on the way?” David said.

“When did you turn funny? I’m the funny one around here. You’re messing with the dynamic,” Emma huffed. “Why don’t you go make yourself useful and find your wife and keep her from getting me killed?”

David stepped out of the closet. “Emma, please, it’ll be fine. Who do you think gave Snow her baby shower in the Enchanted Forest?”

Hazel eyes went wide. “Regina threw a baby shower? Were there dramatic entrances and sleep curses involved? Did she have a raven?” Emma joked and then winced. “Don’t tell her I made that joke. It’s one thing to joke about curses, but it’s another thing to get my Disney characters wrong.”

David shook his head. “You’re awful. Does she tell you that a lot?”
With a snort, Emma rolled her eyes. “You know she does. There are days when it’s done hourly. But, in all seriousness, Regina threw Mom a baby shower?”

“It was a little before we got cursed back here, but from what I recall, she thought Ruby’s set up was, and I quote, ‘tacky and tasteless’ and decided to take charge,” David replied.

“This sounds a lot like Regina.” The only thing missing was the childish name-calling.

“Oh, this might also be a good time to tell you I found her crying while planning it one day. You might want to watch that,” David said.

“Well, thank you. Now, I have to look forward to my impending demise and her emotional breakdown. Anything else you want to throw at me?” Emma sighed. *Why would Regina cry at a baby shower? Is that why she doesn’t want one or was she just freaking out because she thought she’d never see her baby again? God, I wish she’d just freaking talk to me about this shit!*

“How about congratulations and I’m proud of you?” David grinned.

Emma felt a blush burn her face and she hunched over a little. “Not in front of other people, Dad.”

“Mulan’s practically family since we’re all at the sheriff’s department.” David walked over and gave Emma a hug around her shoulders. “You’re doing good. I just wanted you to know that.”

“Thanks.” Emma smiled. It felt nice to hear, especially when it was about just her life in general rather than her being the people’s hero. It was good to know her father was proud of her for being her and not the Savior. *He likes me.*

“All right, let me get back to inventory. You and Mulan get with the paperwork and let’s hope no monsters show up before the baby shower,” David said. “And, no, monsters would not stop your mother from doing this baby shower.”

“I didn’t think they would.” Emma was fairly certain Hell and high water would not be able to stop her mother from doing the shower. So, she sighed and turned back to Mulan. They needed to get the paperwork out of the way anyway.

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Next time: baby shower.
16: Candy Rain

“I know what you’re doing,” Regina said as Emma helped her out of the car. Regina refused to ride in the Bug, using her pregnancy as an excuse, but she also refused to let Emma drive her car, so Emma had to tell her to go to Granny’s and then had to awkwardly run around the car to help Regina out of the driver’s seat.

“Can you just pretend you don’t?” Emma already knew she would probably be sleeping on the couch by the end of the night, despite the fact that guest room was still set up as her room.

“I drove here, didn’t I?” Regina pointed out.

Emma’s brow furrowed. She had no idea what that response meant and tried to work it out in her brain, but gave up fairly quickly. “You’re not going to set me on fire or anything, right?”

Regina scoffed. “Of course not. I’ve made it a point to not use my magic for five months. Why would I break that streak now?” Then, a dangerous smirk settled onto her face. “Of course, I do know quite a few non-magical torture techniques.”

Emma snickered. “I’m familiar with a few of those.” She enjoyed quite a few of those, actually.

Regina gave her a wicked smirk. “I know, but not none of the ones I’d use now would be ones you’d like.”

Emma sighed. “Well, that’s no fun. Why are you acting like this is so horrible, though? There’s so many things we need and we might be able to get them now. I mean, Regina, we don’t even have diapers yet. Even I know we’re going to need a shit load of diapers.”

Regina’s face fell into a deadpan expression. “Pun intended?”

Emma grinned. “You know it.”

Regina narrowed her gaze on Emma. “Make another pun and I will burn everything.”

Emma rolled her eyes, even though things could easily take that turn. “You’ll burn everything regardless. Look, if you don’t have a good time, I promise I’ll make it up to you.”

“How?”

“I’ll serve you steak fajitas covered in barbecue sauce in bed and go down on you the whole time you’re eating them,” Emma promised. *That actually sounds like a lot of fun.*

Regina’s eyes practically sparkled and she licked her lips. “We’re doing that regardless.”

“No, no, no. You can’t take my apology and turn it into something we’re doing just for the hell of it.
That’s for emergencies if I need to make something up to you.” Or when she wanted to surprise Regina, which she would do in a few days if the baby shower did not tank. There was just something about the look of pure delight in Regina’s eyes that made Emma want to give her everything her heart desired.

Regina scowled, but Emma ushered her to the door of Granny’s before Regina could say anything further. It was a little hard. At seven months, Regina definitely waddled more than walked now. She looked like she could have the baby any day now, even though they were weeks away. Regina needed to take her time and seemed to think about every step she took. Emma thought it was cute, but she dared not say that to Regina.

“Surprise!” Everyone cried as they stepped through the door.

Regina had the decency to gasp and pretend to be shocked, putting her hand over her mouth and everything. Hell, Emma was actually surprised there were people there and Granny’s did not look like Disney World. The place looked good. There were decorations up, a banner saying “congratulations,” and thanks to Henry’s involvement there were gender neutral colors only. It was white and yellow mostly. Snow had gone with a “duckling” theme for whatever reason. Ducklings with crowns. Weird, but okay. Emma was just happy the Disney plans were scrapped. The place was packed already and people rushed them to congratulate them.

“We knew Emma had it in her,” Leroy had the nerve to say, giving Emma a solid smack to her shoulder.

Emma could not believe people actually believed she had impregnated Regina. I kinda wish it was true, but I don’t think it would make me love this baby any more than I already do. It did not matter to her how the baby got there. What mattered to her was where she and Regina were, where she and Henry were, and where they were as a family.

“Okay, let’s get the mother to be on her throne,” Snow said, practically appearing out of nowhere to be at Regina’s elbow.

“I think we better get some food in you before you start talking about destroying people’s happiness,” Emma remarked. “There are sliders.”

If anyone thought Regina was not affected by her pregnancy considering how she tried to carry on like normal, their minds had to change in that moment. Regina looked like Homer Simpson the second she heard sliders and might have made a moan very similar to the cartoon character. Emma went off to make Regina a plate while Snow helped her into the large, wooden chair. The makeshift throne even sat on a platform to allow Regina to reign down on the party.

“I didn’t think you’d appreciate the sliders, but Henry convinced me otherwise,” Snow commented.

“You know I’m going to murder your daughter for this, right?” Regina said as she settled into the seat, looking quite regal. Emma gulped from her spot at the food table, which was hardly a couple of feet away. There were plenty of finger foods, snacks, and an ice cream bar. Henry must have mentioned his mother’s sweet tooth. But, there were also things she considered classy, like shrimp cocktails, sushi rolls, spinach rolls, and other fancy looking things she did not know what they were. Then, there was a table with “real” food, like turkey, rice, and stuff like that. Regina would probably want real food later on, depending on how long they were there.
Snow giggled. “We both know that’s not true.”

“I told you I didn’t want this.” Regina’s voice was an angry hiss and Emma’s stomach dropped a little. She was in trouble, she was sure of it.

“You might not want it, but you need it. So, sit back and enjoy and stop stressing Emma out with unnecessary threats. She’s already got enough on her plate,” Snow said. It was playful, but from Regina’s silence, Emma knew it hit way too close to home.

Snow slipped away, none the wiser of the damage she caused, which could have been the alternative title to Snow’s life. Emma sighed and quickly fixed Regina a couple of sliders with plenty of barbecue sauce on them and grabbed a couple of spinach rolls for her. She eased the plate into Regina’s hands. Regina did not even notice until Emma rubbed her shoulder. Regina looked at her with wide eyes.

“It’s okay. Just enjoy the day,” Emma said.

Regina’s eyes shimmered a little and she opened her mouth, like she was about to speak, but she decided against it. She closed her mouth and just swallowed hard. Emma smiled at her, hoping it would set Regina at ease and get her to relax.

“It’s okay. I’m okay,” Emma said.

“Are you?” Regina whispered, taking Emma’s hand and holding on tight.

“I’m right where I want to be.” It was the stone cold truth. She leaned down and kissed Regina’s cheek. Of course the place erupted into “aw”s so loud Emma thought they might wake the dead. Then there were the flashes. Great, there were pictures of her kissing Regina. She thought it would piss Regina off, but as she pulled away, she saw Regina was smiling. Maybe everything would be all right after all.

Music started up and everyone started mingling. Emma was pleasantly surprised to see her mother had not just invited all her people. Regina had some support in the not-so-small small town of Storybrooke, beyond the expected Kathryn and Tinker Bell. And, not people one would expect, like her Black Knights or nobles who backed her, but “peasants” Regina actually upgraded during the Curse and who maintained that status in the Second Curse. They came to celebrate this moment with Regina. There was a mountain of gifts already stacked in the corner. People cared.

“You allow Pearl to see you outside the office?” Emma joked, nodding toward Pearl. She was speaking to Granny, maybe trying to find out the ingredients to the snack in her hand since she kept pointing to it.

Regina sucked her teeth. “You act as if I keep her chained to the desk.”

Emma snickered. “I thought you might.” Their conversation was paused as Tinker Bell came toward them.

“I didn’t expect to see you here, Tink,” Regina said as the fallen fairy stood before her. Emma was not surprised by Regina’s somewhat chilly tone. Regina and Tinker Bell were on a bit of a downswing in their friendship.

Tinker Bell shrugged. “No, I don’t agree with you leaving Robin, but I support you, just as you do me.”

Regina shook her head. “I owe you, no matter what. Yours is the one life I never intended to ruin.”
Tinker Bell snorted. “I don’t blame you and you know that. Blue made her decision and it was on her to leave you as she did, just like it was on her to strip me of my wings. But, I’ve heard Emma fathered your child, so maybe I should admit the pixie dust was wrong.”

Regina blinked while Emma wondered if she should excuse herself. It seemed like a private conversation. She was not sure if Regina would be comfortable with her standing there either, just in case something personal that Regina was not ready to share came out. So, Emma eased away while Tinker Bell gushed over the impending baby and wanted to know about Regina’s relationship with Emma. Okay, maybe their friendship was on the mend, now.

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“Ten minutes in and Regina hasn’t burn the place down. Sweet!” Ruby giggled as she came up behind Emma.

Emma laughed. “If someone asks to feel her stomach, all bets are off.”

Ruby hit her with a devilish smirk. “You’re the only one who gets the privilege?”

“Oh, she likes it when I do it, although she says it makes the baby move like crazy now.” Emma could feel the baby toss and turn under her fingertips and while Regina seemed discomforted by the movement, she never told Emma to stop touching.

Ruby threw her arms around Emma. “Aw, the kid likes you already, so he or she will really enjoy my ‘you should see my other mother’ onesie.”

Emma shook her head. “You did not get one of those.”

“You’ll have to open the gifts to find out.”

“I know you got this kid a bunch of gay pride clothes.”

“Oh, this kid and Henry.” Ruby pointed over to Henry, who was socializing with some of his friends who dared to brave the Queen’s baby shower. Henry had on a black t-shirt that said “you wish you had two moms like me” in rainbow letters.

“I have to admit, I am jealous of him,” Emma remarked. Two moms seemed like a kick-ass deal, as long as they were good moms. But, then again, two parents point blank seemed like a kick-ass deal, as long as they were good parents. Who am I kidding, one good parent is an awesome deal.

Ruby brought Emma out of her thoughts. “You and me both. Making it even crazier is he can wear that shirt and chat up a girl. Where did you guys get this kid? I’m almost certain you grew him in a lab.”

Emma smiled a little, but then thought about how Henry came to be and it was more trauma than she wished on anyone. Henry had matured through pain, suffering, and lose, even if he did not realize it. I wish we protected him more. She sighed. But, then again, if having the Evil Queen and Savior for mothers did not shield Henry from misery, then Emma hated to admit that trauma might just be part of life. Henry seemed to be using it better than she and Regina ever did. At least there’s that.

Before Emma could get lost in thought, she decided to go over and congratulate Henry on helping put together such a nice baby shower. Ruby followed her. As soon as they stepped over, the girl he was talking to eased away. Emma pouted a bit.

“Your friend didn’t have to go,” Emma said.
Henry smiled. “You and Mom make them nervous sometimes. It’s okay.”

Emma pouted a little more. “Sorry about that, kid.”

Henry shook his head. “It’s seriously okay, Ma.”

Emma puffed up from the mention of her title. He slipped into it so effortlessly, like he had always said it. It felt like a comfortable pair of jeans in word form.

“You did a good job here helping your grandmother pull this together,” Emma said.

“Oh, she needed the help. She was so mad when she realized she didn’t know whether to do pink or blue. Once I said we should go with yellow, it sort of fell into place with her. She really liked the duckling theme and I think it works,” Henry replied.

He looked around and Emma looked with him. There was a plush duckling with a paper crown on every table. There some yellow lollipops shaped like feathers. Emma was tickled by a couple of duck crossing signs. In fact, she planned to keep one and hang it in the baby’s room. Everyone had a little duckling pin and there were ducklings on the glasses.

“You did good, kid,” Emma stated.

Henry shrugged. “Hey, it’s not like I was raised by wolves or something.” He motioned to Regina to remind them who did raise him. “I can throw together a party.” Organizing was probably embedded in his DNA now thanks to Regina.

“Yeah, but you threw together a party for your mom with your grandmother and you made it look good. It certainly doesn’t scream ‘Snow White’ like Emma feared it would,” Ruby commented.

Henry held his chin high. “Well, I had to do something to keep Ma from getting killed, especially when Grams’ wanted to do the Disney Princess thing. I knew if Mom walked in here and it looked like something Grams threw it together on her own, there’d be no saving Ma.”

“I’m guessing you talked to Granny about the menu, too,” Emma said. Emma tried to stay as far away from this as possible, thinking maybe distance would keep Regina from slaughtering her.

“Yeah. Thankfully, she knows almost all of Mom’s cravings involve red meat and sugar, so she didn’t look at me too weird. She didn’t know about the barbecue sauce, though,” Henry replied.

“Well, I hope there’s enough of it or you know Regina will burn everything,” Emma said, doing her best impression of Regina and earning several laughs.

Henry glanced at his mother. “She looks happy. She also looks like she’s about to be done with those sliders and spinach things, though.”

“Oops. My duty calls.” Emma bowed to her son and friend before slipping away to make sure Regina remained properly fed and therefore less likely to explode or breakdown. “You okay? You want anything else to eat?”

Regina frowned. “You don’t need to feed me to make sure I’m properly placated.”

“Regina, you know I’m not doing that,” Emma said. What the hell? I thought things were going good and now I’m under attack?

Ducking her head, Regina rubbed her eyes. “Sorry, darling. The attention…”
“Oh, you don’t want to be the center of attention,” Emma said. That was probably why Regina had not wanted the shower in the first place. Maybe there were bad memories with it. “You want me to make up an excuse? We can leave.”

Regina smiled at her. “No, no. I know our son went through so much trouble to help your mother make this party passable and I don’t want to undermine his effort.”

“You want me to just hang out here for a second and keep you company?”

Regina nodded. “There’s nothing more lonely than to be by yourself in a room full of people.”

“You start wondering if there’s something wrong with you. I know the feeling,” Emma said. Regina probably knew it better than she did, though. “You want to talk about it?”

“Not here.”

Emma understood that. She stuck around Regina, teasing her with one of the plush ducklings and referring to the baby as “Ducky,” which might stick. Of course, she always thought her nicknames would stick and then she would come up with a dozen more.

Then, Maleficent blew in with all of her grandness, and Lily standing somewhat behind her. The party paused, like they expected Maleficent to curse everyone. Of course, she had been invited to this shower, so there was not a big chance of that happening. With that, Emma was relieved of her duties. Maleficent rushed Regina and there were air kisses and things and Emma slid away, hoping the friends would catch up without someone turning into a dragon or fire being involved. Lily followed Emma for whatever reason. She supposed that was better than Lily saying something to upset Regina.

“So, you’re with someone my mother dated, you know?” Lily pointed out for whatever reason.

Emma was unaware they were even on speaking terms, but she could not be the one to ruin the baby shower. “Yeah, my kid pointed out I’ve got a thing for older people.” Neal, Hook, Regina. Maybe it was because Lily burned her when they were teenagers and Emma learned not to trust those her own age. Who knew. “I didn’t expect to see you here.”

Lily shrugged. “I didn’t want to come, but my mother wanted to and we like spending time together.”

“That’s good.” Emma knew the main reason Maleficent did not spend more time with Regina was because she spent almost every waking moment with Lily, making up for lost time. She could understand and respect that.

“Doesn’t mean I forgive your asshole parents.”

Emma shrugged. “I didn’t assume it did. Just like us having this conversation doesn’t mean I forgive you for lying to me and getting me kicked out of a good home.”

Lily grunted. She knew if she wanted to go tit for tat, Emma had enough ammo to go for days. Lily wanted to act like she was the only person ever done wrong in the Enchanted Forest or even by Emma’s parents then she could go on and pretend, but that line was fucking long.

“You don’t have to pretend to be a martyr, you know,” Emma said.

“Oh, I’m sorry, Savior, do you need the wood?” Lily replied.
Emma threw up her hands. “You know what, I’m not even about this right now. Your mom and my pregnant girlfriend are having a good time.” She motioned the pair, who were smiling about something. “And I got a baby on the way. Life is good. If you want to be bitter and hold onto the past, that’s on you. You’ve got your mom, you guys seem cool, and you could have a good life if you want it. Now, if you’ll excuse me, I’ve got friendlier people to mingle with.” She refused to allow Lily to make her feel small on such a glorious occasion.

Emma marched away with her head held high, joining Ruby and Dorothy. Dorothy was trying to talk Ruby out of starting a pool for when Regina was due. Emma decided to be devil’s advocate and see how much Dorothy could stomach her friendship with Ruby by backing up Ruby’s insane scheme that could very well get them both killed.

“And here it is I thought she was the bad influence on you,” Dorothy said to Emma.

Laughing, Emma squared her shoulders. “You’ve got me confused with my mother. Me and Ruby are like each other’s evil twin.”

“Yes, but I’m sure your… I’m sorry, I don’t even know what Regina is to you. No one ever refers to her as your girlfriend or your wife, but you have a child together and one on the way,” Dorothy said.

Emma scratched the back of her neck. “Yeah, we decided on partners. Something beyond girlfriends and close enough to spouse without the legally binding marriage certificate.”

Dorothy nodded. “I’m happy for you.”

Emma smiled. “Thanks. I’m happy for you, too. Thank you for making Ruby happy.”

Ruby’s face turned a shade of red her cape would envy. “Emma.”

Emma laughed, but before she could embarrass Ruby a little more, she noticed Mulan enter with Marian and Roland. Emma met Mulan’s eyes and they smiled at each other. She excused herself from Ruby and Dorothy and then made her way over to the little group.

“Hey, I didn’t expect to see you guys here,” Emma said.

“Well, we owe you both so much and we wanted to celebrate your family with you,” Mulan explained. She held up a bag with a gift. “Your mother helped us pick something out. She says you’ll need it.”

“That could be anything from patience to a bassinet,” Emma remarked.

“I think the patience you require would come in a larger box,” Mulan said.

Emma guffawed. “You made a joke! Good one. Look, I don’t want you two to be uncomfortable, but it’s only polite for you to say hi to Regina.” She motioned toward Regina’s chair. Maleficent was gone, replaced with Kathryn, which Emma thought was good. Kathryn’s presence might encourage Marian to go over.

Emma was not sure how Marian would feel about greeting and interacting with Regina, even for a short period of time. Hell, she was not sure how Mulan would feel about it. Mulan could not possibly believe Emma had impregnated Regina and had somewhat connected the dots to Robin Hood and Marian’s break up. Of course, Emma sincerely doubted Regina was the reason for one of the greatest love stories ever told to come unraveled the way they did.

Neither Mulan or Marian objected to greeting the woman of the hour. Roland just took off for
Regina. Even after months of separation, he seemed to remember the fun few days they had together in Storybrooke and whatever fun they had in the Enchanted Forest. Emma was a little hurt for the child. He grinned as he stood in front of Regina and interrupted her conversation with Kathryn in a way only a five year old could.

“Regina, you have so many balloons!” Roland threw his arms out and spun around, as if showing off the balloons.

Regina smiled and laughed. “I know. Hopefully, you’ll take some, so I won’t have to carry them all home.”

Roland nodded. “I can do that!”

“Thank you, Roland. You’re a life saver. Now, who are you here with?” Regina looked up, face just a little tense, like she expected Robin. When she saw Marian, her face softened and she visibly relaxed.

“We thought we’d come pay our respects,” Marian said as she and Mulan stood before Regina.

“This isn’t a funeral and I’m sure you’ve figured out this realm doesn’t do things like that except for funerals,” Regina pointed out.

“At least she didn’t bow,” Kathryn remarked with a laugh.

“That is true,” Regina replied and then turned her attention back to Marian. “I’m honestly surprised you came.”

“I’ve come to notice this place deals a lot in second chances and forgiveness. You have wronged me, but you also helped me. I think I can move forward,” Marian explained.

Regina scoffed. “I didn’t do anything beyond ask Kathryn to help.”

“We both know you’ve done so much more and Kathryn has done more than that as well. Beyond her handling my divorce and this custody issue, she has explained much of this world to me and how the two of you went from enemies to friends,” Marian said. “Although, I’m left to wonder is there anyone in this town you haven’t threatened to kill or almost killed or something to that effect.”

Regina frowned. “No one I can think of.”

“But, she’s saved us on more than one occasion,” Kathryn chimed in, as if to save the conversation. “At the cost of her own family more often than once as well.”

Regina shook her head. “My family remains in tact.”

“You didn’t know it would at the time, though,” Kathryn pointed out.

“This realm seems to have a knack for putting together families,” Marian commented.

Regina arched an eyebrow. “Did it not break yours apart?”

Marian glanced at Mulan, who was trying to keep Roland from taking a balloon. Marian smiled a little. Emma felt like slapping herself in the forehead for not realizing things sooner.

“I see it as giving me a second chance, at being with my son and being with someone who respects and appreciates me,” Marian answered.
Regina smiled a little. “Then, we’re not so different at this point in our lives. But, I want you to know, I had no plans for this to happen. I tried so hard to stay away from him when you came back. I mourned the loss of a soul mate, not even him in particular, just the idea of having someone who loved me and then I tried to stay away.”

Marian shook her head. “I’ve come to learn it has very little to do with you. He’s not the same man he was and I’m not sure what changed him. The divorce has gone through and we’re moving forward. Well, I am. He’ll have to learn to do the same.”

“Why did you even need a divorce?” Emma accidentally blurted out. “I mean, you were married in the Enchanted Forest and now you’re here.”

Regina gave Emma a deadpanned look. “It astounds me how little our dear sheriff knows about the law in this town. But, I’ll forgive you in this moment as things have been busy since you arrived. In an attempt to include all of the new people who came over in the Second Curse who unfortunately didn’t have Cursed identities and for the people who had contracted agreements from the Enchanted Forest, we passed a law saying that if all parties involved agree with any Enchanted Forest legal documents, then the documents stood. It’s through this law some people were able to keep their Enchanted Forest marriages, like Marian and Robin.”

Emma nodded. “This explains a lot of the domestic dispute calls we get.” Apparently, there were quite a few couples where only one party wanted to keep the Enchanted Forest marriage. They had also seen a lot of fraud cases with people trying to wiggle out of debts they owed from the Enchanted Forest.

Regina sighed and shook her head. “What am I going to do with you?” The question would have been worrisome if not for the hint of a smile on her face. She reached out and caressed Emma’s cheek, as if she forgot there were people around. Her eyes were so soft as they focused on Emma that Emma felt her insides melt from the attention. Her hand fell to her side as Kathryn spoke up.

“It was a good way to compromise between those who want the town to be more like home and for those who want to embrace the culture of this realm,” Kathryn said. “Or for people like me who like a little of both.”

Regina scoffed. “What about the Enchanted Forest are you missing? The forced marriages or the magic that kept your father from touching you in even the most basic manner?”

Kathryn chuckled. “You’re awful. I don’t see what Emma sees in you.”

Regina smirked. “Oh, please, don’t people wonder the same with you being my friend? Don’t get me started on what people say about what you see in Frederick.”

Kathryn laughed. Emma did not get a chance to see the friends in action a lot, but she imagined this was how they were. The playful sniping probably helped Kathryn move passed the crimes Regina committed against her. Emma knew how that could be, even when the sniping was not so playful.

Marian stepped off to speak with people and Emma did the same. Every now and then, she glanced over at Regina, just to check on her. There were always people by her, talking to her, possibly congratulating her, or offering her advice. Emma got close enough once to hear Granny telling Regina what to do if the baby showed any signs of magic, sharing what she went through when Ruby displayed her were abilities. Even though it was weird, it was still nice. Maleficent made her rounds before she ended up back over by Regina, sharing tales of her egg before Lily was snatched from her. She did not sound bitter or upset, which Emma thought was good.
Emma checked on Henry, too, without getting too close to him. She did not want to scare away his few friends who braved the party. He never had a shortage of people to talk and Emma did not have a shortage of people congratulating her. She got clapped on the shoulder so much, she thought someone might dislocate it.

“Hey, let’s step outside for a second,” David said to Emma, saving her from a few guys she did not even know. They said they worked for Regina, but she was not sure if they meant they worked for “the queen” or “the mayor.”

“What’s up?” Emma asked once they escaped the hot diner.

“I figured you could use some saving. Besides, I wanted to congratulate you alone,” David replied.

“You already did."

“Yeah, but this is the place to really do it. I’m also curious what you guys want us to do about the assumptions. I mean, I’m sure you’re flattered people think you did that, but do you want us to correct anyone?”

Emma shook her head. “Not right now. I mean, I don’t want you to lie, but you don’t have to say anything if they make that assumption. I’m not too sure what Regina wants to do now.”

“Not to sure? You don’t have a lot of time left to figure things out.”

Emma sighed. “I know, but I don’t want to push her. This whole thing for her, it might as well be held together by dental floss. I don’t know why and she’s not really talking about it. I’m scared she’s going to resent the baby when the kidling finally comes.”

David gave her a sad look. “Maybe you need to talk to her about it. It’s not pushing. You have to get her mentally prepared for this baby or it could affect her parenting and I think we both know Regina doesn’t want to be a horrible mother.”

Emma nodded. “This is very true.”

“Beyond that, are you ready?”

Emma stood up a little taller. “Can’t wait. I feel so connected to this kid already and seeing how Henry’s ready to be big brother… Man, this kid could have fallen from the sky for all I care at this point. I just want to be his or her mom.”

“That’s good. I’m happy for you. I’m ready to be a granddad again.” David squared his shoulders.

“Thanks, Dad.”

David shook his head. “Don’t thank me, Emma. I want our family and I hate that I’ve done such a piss poor job of showing it.”

“Dad, you don’t need to.”

“I do,” he said firmly. “I know we’ve talked about this and I know we’ve all had to take time to adjust to each other, but I need you to know for sure I want our family. You’re my daughter and I want to be there for you. I want to be there for your kids. Hell, I want to be there for your partner, despite the fact that she has tried to kill me and thinks I’m an idiot.”

“For the record, she thinks I’m an idiot, too, but I’m almost certain she thinks we’re cute because of
“it,” Emma snickered.

David smiled a little. “Well, she’s not wrong.”

“No, she’s not. It’s all right, Dad. I understand you and you understand me. It’s taken us a while to get here, but we’re here.”

David sighed. “I just wish I wasn’t such an ass about it early on.”

“It’s okay. My kid’s more mature than me, too.”

“I wouldn’t say you’re more mature than me, but Henry definitely has you beat by a mile.” A grin spread across David’s face.

“Hey!” Emma shook her fist at him.

“Now, let’s brave the inside of the baby shower again as the games start and Regina reconsiders killing all of us,” David remarked.

The baby games would be the true test of Regina’s patience and Emma’s sanity. “If we stick a slider in front of her and everyone backs away slowly, we might be okay.”

He laughed. “I have definitely noticed a change in her diet.”

“She’s like a normal person. While it’s not as bad as it was a couple of months ago, red meat and sugar are her things. We actually have to monitor her intake. Henry caught her sneaking an extra cookie one night and sent her to her room. It was hilarious. She pouted and everything as she went. I was forbidden from going to keep her company until bedtime.”

David guffawed, holding his side. “I can’t even picture that! She likes sugar that much?”

“If I put a chocolate milkshake in her hand right now, she might figure out how to create world peace. Hell, I might do that to make sure we survive the baby games.”

He laughed more. “Are you sure that’s not your kid?”

Emma smiled a bit. “No, I am sure that’s my kid.” Biological or not, Regina was having her baby.

David nodded and smiled back. They went back into the baby shower. Despite all of the people, the attention to her pregnancy, and the very annoying baby games, Regina smiled all the way through. Emma thought that was a good sign. She did not even have to give Regina any ice cream to help. Maybe they would be able to talk about things later when they got home if Regina’s mood held.

As the party continued and night settled in, Regina started opening the gifts. There was so much stuff and each item proved to be something they needed. In the end, things went so well, Regina made a speech.

“On behalf of myself, Emma, Henry, and this little duckling on the way, we all thank you for everything you’ve purchased and provided for us. I’d also like to thank everyone for respecting Henry’s request for gender neutral clothing. Although, I suspect from some of the outfits, you considered Emma’s style regardless of the baby’s gender.” Regina cast a look at Ruby.

“Boy or girl, they will kill in those jeans and that beanie!” Ruby nodded for emphasis. Dorothy laughed and covered Ruby’s mouth with both hands. It did not help.

“How one finds baby jeans, I do not know,” Regina said.
“You forgot there was a three piece pantsuit in there, too. Totally gender neutral,” Ruby pointed out with a grin.

“Regardless, we appreciate everything. I honestly never would’ve imagined so many people getting together to celebrate anything with me,” Regina admitted.

“Hey, this is the land of second chances and forgiveness,” Kathryn said.

There were raised glasses to that. At the end of the night, David volunteered to drive all the gifts over since there was no way they would be able to fit everything in Regina’s trunk. Geppetto would deliver the crib when he was done making it. Emma and Henry packed what they could and then headed home. Regina, eyes halfway closed, yawned and silently handed Emma the keys to the car. Regina was asleep before Emma even pulled away from the curb.

Emma regretted having to wake Regina up, but she was too heavy to carry anywhere and Emma dare not try magic right now. Regina was groggy as expected, but fell against Emma and they made their way upstairs. Emma helped Regina out of her clothes and into bed before spooning behind Regina. Her hand eased onto Regina’s stomach.

“Kathryn said she would be honored to be my deputy mayor and take over while I’m on leave,” Regina whispered.

Emma gasped. “You asked her?”

“Who else would I ask? I can’t trust anyone who was close to me as queen as I’m almost certain they would try to turn the mayor’s office into dictatorship. She has experience in governing, but she understands what we have here is better for everyone involved than what we had in the Enchanted Forest. She’s the least likely to try and steal power, but she’ll also be capable and strong enough to fight off anyone who tries to take power from her.”

“And how long do you think she’ll do it?”

“She offered three months.”

Emma’s heart jumped. “And you accepted?” Maybe she is coming to terms with this. And it’s about time, too.

“I did.”

“I’m happy. Are you okay if I take a month off then? To bond with you and the baby?”

“Nothing would make me happier.” Regina put her hand on Emma’s and held it tight. Emma smiled and cuddled in closer. “And, don’t tell your mother as I will deny I ever said it, but that shower was not entirely awful.”

Emma chuckled. “Almost a compliment. It would totally go to her head.”

Regina grunted and Emma chuckled more. It would go to her mother’s head, but she did not have to say anything. Everyone at the shower could tell Regina enjoyed herself. For a moment, Emma thought to ask Regina about the shower she threw Snow, but decided to hold off. Let the day end on a good note.

-8-8-8-8-

Next time: there is a problem and Regina panics.
Looming Shadows

Chapter Notes

I don’t own these characters; Disney/ABC does.

A/N: a little bit of sexy times here.

17: Looming Shadows

Morning sunlight crept into the room and Emma could feel the baby moving just under her palm. Better than that, Emma could feel warm skin. Apparently, sometime during the night, her hand decided it was not content to rest just on top of Regina’s sexy nightie, and who the hell knew they made sexy nighties for pregnant women? Whoever thought of that, bless their soul. Well, now Emma wanted to do more than just feel warm skin.

Emma’s hand wandered up Regina’s belly and to the underside of her breast. She had to be careful with Regina’s breasts. They were sensitive and ached, especially her nipples. It caused Emma to pout on more than one occasion. Once she had a chance, she planned to spend an entire night devoted to worshipping Regina’s breasts. Regina winced, which caused Emma to move her hand.

“Sorry,” Emma whispered, kissing behind Regina’s ear. Her hand moved to Regina’s hip, caressing there and the curve of Regina’s ass.

Regina did not say anything, just pressed her ass closer to Emma. Emma could take a hint. Her hand eased in between Regina’s legs to discover warm desire waiting for her. Regina rolled her hips, whining in search of Emma’s fingers.

“Patience,” Emma said, adjusting her body a bit. She moved, so she could use both hands, but then Regina groaned.

“Come back,” Regina muttered, sounding more asleep than anything else.

Emma smirked. “As you wish.” She pressed herself against Regina’s back and slipped her hand right where Regina wanted her.

Regina mewed with the contact and shifted her hips against Emma’s fingers. Emma groaned, not even having to move. She kissed and licked Regina’s neck until Regina turned her head. Their lips met and Emma’s body suddenly had a mind of its own. She ground against Regina’s ass as her fingers glided through Regina’s pleasure. Regina moaned into her mouth and she happily swallowed each sound, feeling full from each noise. Regina bucked harder and Emma added some pressure before she dipped inside of Regina.

“Yes,” Regina hissed, her head falling forward.

“Feels good?” Emma asked.

“Yes!”
“You’re close?”

“Fuck yes.” Regina moved faster. Emma matched her pace.

Regina’s moans and mews increased. Emma moaned right along with her, elating in each ripple of Regina’s body. Regina felt so good. Emma loved everything about making love with Regina and knew if they had enough time, she could and would climax right along with Regina just from this. But, there was not enough time, as they would have to get up eventually. Regina’s body clenched around Emma’s fingers and Emma’s breath hitch. Regina turned again, needing a kiss if the feel of her mouth meant anything. She screamed into Emma’s mouth and it was delicious.

“That is quite the wake up,” Regina panted.

Emma grinned. “I liked it, too, especially since you didn’t complain about neither of us brushing our teeth.” It had happened before.

Regina groaned. “I’m more concerned over my lack of shower.”

Emma stroked her thigh. “You’re fine. It’s not like you did anything at the baby shower, except sit there, eat, and have a good time.”

Regina sighed. “I shower at least one a day, Emma, you know that.”

“I’m just saying it won’t kill you. Come on, let’s just bask in the afterglow a little.” Emma wrapped her arms around Regina, doing her best to avoid moving Regina’s body pillow, which she cuddled against more and more each night as her stomach grew. If the position of the pillow changed even a little, Regina could easily find it impossible to get comfortable again and she would whine the whole night when they laid down to sleep.

Regina sighed and relaxed against Emma’s body. Emma kissed Regina’s neck and earned a pretty purr. She breathed in the wonderful scent that was all Regina. She caressed Regina’s stomach and Regina groaned.

“You’re going to make it move,” Regina said.

“It’s okay. I also have the soothing touch,” Emma replied. She ignored the fact that Regina said “it.” Maybe it was just because they did not know the sex rather than Regina still trying to distance herself from the baby.

Regina groaned. “It’s too early, Emma.”

“It’s too early for me to be cute, but not too early for my fingers? If I didn’t know any better, I’d think you were using me for my body.”

Regina wiggled against her a little. “The warmth does make it easier to sleep.”

“And you dare say I’m awful.” Emma snorted. “So, the baby shower wasn’t too painful, was it? You had a good time with your friends, right?”

“It was nice to see Mal and hear about her relationship with her daughter. They’re trying, but she tells me that it’ll take a lot for Lily to let go of her anger and hate. She asked me to talk her.”

“Are you going to?”

“I owe it Mal to try. It would crush her to lose her daughter twice and then also lose someone else to
the madness that is your mother.”

Emma nodded. She hoped it worked, not that she particularly cared about Lily anymore. After thinking on it, she did not believe having her darkness made Lily’s life that much harder. After all, she supposedly had no darkness in her and her life still sucked a majority of the time. They made their own destiny and they were their own people. Lily just wanted an excuse for why she made stupid decisions to help her life suck. Now, Lily’s problem with her parents was totally valid, considering they separated her from her mother, and forced her to grow up an orphan. Emma would never be okay with that and she hoped Regina did help smooth things over because she did not want Lily to try to kill her parents or even drive herself insane with want of revenge. But, beyond that, she could not care less about what Lily did with her life.

“So, I guess something good came out of you being the center of attention,” Emma said and Regina just grunted. “What’s with you not wanting to be the center of attention? You’re usually all about the drama.”

Regina turned to glare at her for a moment. “Being dramatic doesn’t always mean one wants to be the center of the universe.”

“Tell me. You said you could be in a room full of people and still feel lonely. I know what that’s like.”

Regina sighed and her voice was small. “I wish you didn’t.”

Emma nuzzled her. “It’s okay. I’ve dealt with my past and the trauma and come to terms with it. I want you to get there, too. Yeah, I was a little orphan kid in a group home and no one ever visited me and I had all these different foster families where sometimes I was just a paycheck to them and nothing more. But, what about you? Was this with Cora? With Snow’s dad?”

Regina sighed again and turned all the way around, her stomach putting a bit of space between them. “Are you sure you want to know?”

Emma moved her hand to Regina’s cheek. “Yes, I want to know. I want to know everything about you. I want to be here for you, all the time.”

Regina’s eyes searched her face and she opened her mouth briefly, but quickly shut it. Her eyes drifted to the mattress and, for a second, Emma thought she might be making something up. But, then Regina met her eyes again and things seemed the same, like Regina needed read her before saying anything.

“There were times, with my mother, I felt like a doll. I was to be dressed up, made up, and stand there, looking pretty. With the King, it ended up the same way, except at least my mother would parade nobles to me or me to them to speak with and show off how intelligent I was every now and then. The King just wanted me to stand there or sit there. No one ever engaged, unless given his permission and it was rare. I was just to be there, on display. A pretty bauble for everyone to gawk at, like some museum piece.” Regina swallowed, the sound echoing through the room.

Emma ran her hand through Regina’s hair and kissed her softly. “Well, you’re nobody’s doll anymore. And, just like at the shower, if you ever feel uncomfortable like that, you just say the word and I’ll make up an excuse to us the hell outta there. I don’t care where we are.” She would never let someone make Regina feel like a thing ever again.

Regina smiled. “How do I deserve you?”
“Same way I deserve you. We made a decision. I just need you to remember that the next time I screw up.” Emma grinned. Regina laughed and gave her a kiss. It was good to see Regina almost carefree, even if it was for a moment. Emma would hold onto that image, that feeling, and hoped Regina would do the same.

“Can we stay like this for a while?” Regina asked.

Emma glanced at the clock. “We have time. Henry can figure out breakfast without us.”

Regina nodded. “I have to remember to thank him. He did a very good job on the baby shower.”

“Was it up to par with the one you did?” It was a good opening, so how could Emma pass it up? She wanted to find out why Regina had cried while setting up Snow’s baby shower to make sure it did not happen again.

Regina chuckled a bit. “Well, I did have magic.” She was quiet for a moment. “Your father told you, didn’t he?”

“He wanted me to know, in case you needed emotional support during the baby shower.”

Regina smiled and kissed her. “You are all the support I need. I’m sorry your father had to see that. I was just upset, thinking of Henry… and you. Snow and David seemed to be rebuilding their family while you and Henry were a world away from me.”

“You sure that’s all?” Emma was not sure why, but she felt like there was more to it. There was always more to it with Regina. \textit{Probably with me, too.}

“That was more than enough. I had no one and I wasn’t sure how you both were doing.”

“So, you cared even then?” Emma snickered.

Regina snorted. “Oh, be quiet you. You’re ruining the mood.”

Emma cuddled closer to Regina and decided to let it go. At least Regina talked about it and did not get upset over it. Of course, it might have had a little to do with the sex that opened their morning, but whatever worked. It was nice of Regina to confirm she missed Emma back in the Enchanted Forest, too. It was a very good morning. She hoped for many more.

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Emma was a little late for a lunch date with Regina thanks to some monster-sized snakes that were ruining the only mall in the town. She wondered if Disney owned the rights to \textit{Anaconda}. \textit{Or maybe they’re related to Kaa from Jungle Book. He was pretty big. What is with all the weird science going on around here?} David decided to question Whale about it since he was the resident mad scientist and Emma was able to get away for a few minutes. She had texted Regina when she was on the way, so she did not have to suffer her wrath, but she thought Regina might have eaten without her. Instead, she walked into \textit{Granny’s} to even worse sight than Regina eating alone.

Regina was at what had become their corner table, but she was not by herself. Robin Hood decided to sit with her and he was talking to her from Emma could tell. Regina did not look flattered, glaring at him in a way that might get him set on fire if Emma did not step in. She was tempted to wait until she smelled smoke, but they did not need a fire in the place she was about to eat in. \textit{I guess I’ll go save him then. Well, I’m really saving Regina, so still doing my duty as the White Knight around here.}
“Regina, you can’t keep me from my flesh and blood,” Robin hissed.

“Robin, what are you doing here?” Emma inquired as she stood at Regina’s elbow.

“This doesn’t concern you,” Robin replied and looked at Emma as if she was the worst of the worse.

“I think it does concern me. Now, how about you leave Regina alone? You remember what happened last time you tried to force this confrontation,” Emma stated.

“I won’t stand for this!” Robin slapped the table and shot to his feet, now looking down at Emma, like she should be scared of him.

“You just did. Look, you’re making a scene that’s not even necessary, so how about you get out of here before I throw your ass in jail for harassing a pregnant woman?” Emma doubted she could do that, but his actions had to be harassment. She might have to talk Regina into getting a restraining order against Robin since he seemed to have listening problems.

“Neither of you can keep me from what’s mine!” he roared and it hit her. It hit her like an eighteen wheeler.

“Dude, you’re drunk out of your mind.” His breath made her feel like she might fail a breathalyzer just from him shouting at her.

“This is my child, Regina!” Robin roared.

“This has nothing to do with you!” Regina pounded the table with her fists and tried to rush to her feet. It was a little hard to do with thirty-three weeks worth of pregnant belly. Emma helped her and kept her balanced.

“This has everything to do with me!” Robin countered.

Regina flexed her hand, as if Robin was about to feel the first bit of magic she would do since finding out about her pregnancy. Emma put her hand on Regina’s back, hoping to relax her. Regina let loose a breath and leaned back into Emma, silently ceding control of the situation. Emma stepped over to Robin Hood. He growled and shoved her. *Okay, just what I needed. Thank you gods of stupidity.*

“Okay, that’s it, pal. You’re under arrest for public intoxication.” Emma grabbed him by the collar and shoved him toward the door.

Robin grunted and put up something of a struggle. Emma was used to dealing with much more belligerent and coordinated people from her days as a bounty hunter, so he was not much of a problem. She cuffed him and shoved him into the back of the cruiser. She locked the doors and wiped her hands of him for the moment. She went back into the diner, where Regina was still on her feet and silently fuming. The vein in her forehead seemed ready to pop and her entire face was red.

“You okay?” Emma asked, her hands finding their way to Regina’s waist.

“The nerve of him!” Regina growled.

“It’s okay. I’ll let him go cool off in the cell. What did he want?”

Regina just shook her head and sat back down. “Let’s have lunch. We can talk about it at home.” She pinched the bride of her nose and closed her eyes for a second.
“You sure you’re okay?” Emma inquired.

“Yes. Please, sit.” Regina pointed across from her.

Emma nodded and they did just that. It was a bit of a quiet lunch with tension popping around them thanks to Robin. Emma could learn to hate Robin if she tried. Or if he tried, especially if he pulled a stunt like that again. How dare he upset Regina while she was so close to giving birth? Regina grunted and hunched over a little, drawing Emma’s attention from her thoughts.

“You okay, babe?” Emma said, reaching across the table.

Regina growled. “Don’t call me that. It’s just…” She gritted her teeth and put her hand on her stomach. “It’s the baby moving around.”

“You sure? I’ve seen you when the baby moves and it’s not like that. Should I call the doctor?” Emma asked. Regina looked like she was in pain.

Regina shook her head and let out a slow breath. “No, I’m fine. Let’s just eat. Please.”

Emma nodded and they ordered. Regina seemed fine now. Well, she did not make any more pained noises and her face remained a little flushed, but she was distracted. She did not offer much conversation, even as Emma tried to tell her about the monster snakes.

“You Regina, are you sure you’re okay?” Emma asked.

Regina blinked and her eyes focused on Emma, as if she did not recall Emma was sitting across from her. “Oh, yes. I’m fine.”

“You want me to just go lock Robin up?” Emma pointed behind her with her thumb. She wanted to punch him in the face for upsetting Regina so much.

“I’m not thinking about him, dearest.”

“Then, tell me, what’s on your mind? You haven’t heard a word I said, even when I told you about the property damage, which there was plenty of. Usually, you’re all about town property and stuff, Madam Mayor,” Emma said with a grin.

Regina sniffed. “It’s nothing. Tell me again about these snakes. Maybe we can figure out where they came from.”

“I hope we don’t have a Big Bad on our hands right now. I need to focus on you and junior.”

Regina rolled her eyes. “I’m not sure if I’m more annoyed by you addressing our lives using TV Tropes or the fact that you’ve decided to call the baby ‘junior’ for the moment. Junior who exactly?”

“Junior you, obviously. You’re just annoyed to be annoyed right now. I’d give you a foot rub to improve your attitude, but I know you don’t want me to do that in public.”

Regina grunted. “There’s always tonight.”

“Yes, there is. Look, let’s wrap this up early, so I can take Robin in and maybe even get home early. We can relax a little.”

Regina nodded. “I’d reward you for escaping the snakes unscathed, but you got swallowed by one.”

Emma winced. “Oh, you heard that part, but did you hear where I did that on purpose to save
“Someone and then cut our way out of the snake? Did you hear that part?”

“Ever the Savior.”

Emma just grinned. They finished up quickly and parted ways. Emma returned to the cruiser, where Robin was still stuck in the car. He was sweaty and his clothing was wrinkled. He probably got himself all worked up trying to get out of the car. The funny thing was that she only used the child lock on him. She found it funny that this worked on most criminals she picked up in Storybrooke. They all fell to the mighty power of the child lock.

“You think Regina wants you? You’re just a shadow of me, down to the blond hair,” Robin spat.

Emma scoffed as she pulled the car away from the curb. “You’re kidding, right?” She glanced at him in the mirror and saw the glare in his eyes. “Oh, you’re serious. What the hell about me is a shadow of you? The only thing you do better than me is lose women to women. You’re an ace at that, pal.” She gave him a thumbs’ up.

Robin snarled. “I haven’t lost anyone!”

“You have and from the way you’re throwing yourself at the women around town and none of them want anything to do with you, I have to say, you’re making your cartoon fox counterpart look really bad.”

“What the hell are you even talking about? You think you can keep Regina? Once she has my baby, she’ll remember we’re soul mates, connected on a level you couldn’t even imagine, and she’ll come back to me.”

“Oh, I see, you’re living in your own fantasy land. First off, Regina doesn’t even want to acknowledge you had a hand in making that baby. She’s perfectly content to let the good people of Storybrooke believe I put that baby there and most people want to believe that as well. So, even your little scene in the diner is going to fade away and I’ll go in there tomorrow with people worrying about my kid after you upset my partner. And, for the record, that is my kid. This soul mate thing you’re talking about, yeah, haven’t heard Regina bring that up either. Hell, even Tink admitted she could’ve been wrong with the pixie dust and who the hell let’s dust tell them who to spend their lives with? I know it’s hard for you to believe, but maybe, just maybe, you’re not God’s gift to women. I know it’s a shock, but it could be true.”

Robin snarled and Emma chuckled. He moved just enough to kick her chair, like a spoiled brat. Robin had balls and not in the good way. She wondered what made him fall so far.

“Have you always been like this or did this happen after you lost Marian? I mean, I feel like she’s attracted to the noble type, so there had to be something good about you, but I don’t see it,” Emma commented.

“I have honor,” Robin gritted out.

“I think we have a different definition of honor. Where was your honor when you fucked Regina with your wife’s frozen body right there after you couldn’t break your wife’s curse?” Emma asked. Hell, she would even give him not being able to break Marian’s curse. She had only just come back and they needed to relearn each other, but nothing would ever be able to explain how he could sleep with Regina with Marian’s body right there.

“Marian’s changed, if that even is Marian.”

“You don’t say this bullshit around your kid, right?” She hoped like hell he at least cared enough
about Marian’s relationship with Roland.

“Marian has changed,” he repeated, like that made it true.

She snorted. “Oh, so it’s her fault? It’s not the fact you wanna stick your little thing wherever you please? Not the fact that you seemed to think you could have both of them if you played your cards, right?” Did he really think Regina or Marian would play sister wives with him?

“That’s none of your damn business!”

Emma shrugged. “Just saying, that’s not honor on my block.”

“You don’t know what honor is.”

“Nah, I’m almost certain you don’t know what it is. You just seem to like saying the word. Saying something doesn’t make it true, even around here.”

They got to the station before Robin could come up with a proper rebuttal. Emma escorted him to the cell and shoved him. He grabbed the bars, like a lot of people did when they got locked up, and glared at her. She unlocked his cuffs and rolled her eyes at him.

“You’re not the first sheriff with a grudge against me,” Robin said.

“Yeah, which makes me wonder what awesome stories about Nottingham I haven’t heard because you’re kind of a douche,” Emma replied as she went to her desk.

David walked in from his lunch break. “Why is Robin locked up?”

“Public intoxication. He’s drunk off his ass and he pushed me.”

“Pushed you?” David scowled and glared at Robin.

Emma waved it off. “Yeah, it was nothing. I’m sure it was brought on by too much… whatever the hell he drinks. It was just a good reason to bring him in until he sobers up. You wanna do the test for me? At this point, I don’t even want to look at him.” She curled her lip in disgust. David shrugged and moved to do the test.

“You must be so proud of your daughter,” Robin hissed as David approached him with the breathalyzer.

“I actually am, but since I’ve spent a lot of time around Regina in recent years, I know that’s sarcasm. What do you have against Emma, beyond the obvious?” David inquired as he put the device to Robin’s lips. “Blow.”

Robin turned his head. “The obvious?”

“Look, you’re in here whether you blow or not. You’re just making it harder on yourself by not cooperating and it will be noted,” David explained as he held the device out for Robin once more. He got a better response that time. “And, the obvious, the whole town knows she’s with Regina and the whole town knows Regina left you. That has to hurt. Added to that, the town’s also familiar with your recent divorce and the fact that a lot of ladies have turned you down for dates. You sound like you’re going through a lot and you’ve decided to take it out on Emma.” He looked at the breathalyzer. “Wow. Twice the legal limit. Make yourself comfortable. You’ll be seeing Emma for a while.”
“She’s keeping me from my child,” Robin growled.

Emma chimed in to field that one. “No, for a number of reasons. The first being, legally, you have no child. The second being, I’m supporting Regina’s decision and you’ve probably just made it hard on yourself by announcing to the whole damn lunch rush at Granny’s that Regina’s carrying your baby.”

David turned to her with wide eyes. “They believed that?”

“I dunno. No one said anything. I think everyone just likes to believe I’ve done it,” Emma replied.

David nodded and turned back to Robin. “You put yourself in that position. You can’t force any of these women to do what you want and you trying is only going to make matters worse. Again, thanks to your shenanigans, the whole town’s familiar with your business, not just with Regina and Marian, but also with Roland. You think being arrested for public intoxication is going to help your case there?”

Robin huffed and his eyes searched the station for answers. “How can she just take my child? She hasn’t been around for five years and now I have to share my seed.”

“I think the problem is you share your seed a little too willingly. Roland’s just as much Marian’s child as yours and get your head out of your ass. She was dead until I fucked up the timeline,” Emma pointed out.

“Good job, Barry,” David remarked.

“The kid got to you with the Flash?” Emma asked. She refused to watch that one with Henry since she was already watching Agents of SHIELD and Supergirl with him, along with every single cartoon movie Marvel and DC put out. *I see a Comic Con in our future soon enough.*

David laughed. “Gotta get my bonding time in where I can. Arrow and the Flash are our shows.”

Emma did not argue that. David finished up with Robin, who was twice the legal limit. Emma was not surprised. She was just happy the idiot did not know how to drive or he could have made the situation so much worse. *Why the hell does he act like he’s so damned entitled to everything?*

“So, how was your lunch?” Emma asked her father.

David snorted. “Clearly not as exciting as yours.”

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Emma was about to lean on Henry in an effort to win the last lap of Mario Kart, but she was distracted by the sound of the front door opening and closing. Regina was home. But, there was something off. Emma felt a boulder of dread in her stomach. It reminded her of how she felt back when she used to leave Regina’s house at night right after they found out Regina was pregnant, but the feeling right now was much worse. It was like a thousand hot needles jammed into her heart. Her guts twisted and it took effort to not throw up.

Emma glanced at the entrance to the living room, waiting to for Regina to appear, but after a few seconds, there was nothing. Emma strained her ears to listen to what would be keeping Regina and then she heard a wince. Every hair on her body stood at attention and her heart raced, threatening to implode.

“Regina?” Emma called as she got off of the couch.
Regina groaned. “Coming.” Her voice was strained.

Emma practically flew off the couch to see what could be wrong. She found Regina in the foyer, holding her stomach and pressed against the wall, sitting on the floor. Emma fell right to her side. Regina panted and a bead of sweat slid down her cheek. The vein in her forehead was ready to burst and her face was redder than her precious apples.

“Regina, what’s wrong? Are you in labor? It’s too soon!” Emma reached out, about to embrace Regina, but then she was scared she might make things worse. She was not ready. She had not packed a bag or put the car seat in. What the hell clothes was the baby coming to come in?

Tears gathered in Regina’s eyes. “I knew this would happen,” she sobbed. “I knew it. I knew it.” She leaned back, banging her head hard against the wall.

“Regina, what the hell happened? What’s wrong?” Emma felt like she might come out of her skin if she did not do something as soon as possible.

Regina wailed. “I knew! I tried. I tried so much and still…” Tears poured down her face and she banged her head more, harder, over and over again.

“Shit!” Emma jumped up and ran to get her phone. “Fuck, what the hell is the number again?” She saved the doctor’s number, but right now, her mind was whirling and it was hard to focus. The world itself seemed like a blur. Calm down. Your partner and baby need you. So calm the fuck down!

“Can I help?” Henry asked.

“Go make sure your mom is all right for me,” Emma replied.

Henry nodded and charged over to Regina. Emma bit her thumbnail as she waited for someone to pick up. Once she got Doctor Alexander on the phone, she explained the situation while watching Regina sob and hit her head on the wall. Emma’s heart dropped into her feet and it hurt to breathe.

“Meet me at the hospital,” Doctor Alexander said.

Emma hung up and fell to Regina’s side. “Regina, we need to get to the car. I’m going to take you the doctor, okay?”

“It doesn’t matter. I tried, even though I knew this would happen!” Regina howled, putting her hand over her face, mumbling into each cutting sob.

Emma turned to their son. She wished she did not have to ask him, but he was there and they needed to move. “Henry.”

Henry just nodded. Together, they settled against opposite sides of Regina and slowly pulled her to her feet. Despite the fact that Regina was weeping as if she was dying, she actually helped them in lifting her up. They did not bother to put shoes on her. Henry grabbed a pair of her flats and shoved them into his pockets while Emma got the door. They got into the car and they were on their way.

Regina curled into herself in the front seat, even with the seatbelt in the way. Emma tried not to panic as she listened to Regina crying, bawling as if things were the worst thing could ever be. Henry was in the back, but he was right on their seats, so he might as well be up front with them.

“Mom, it’s okay. It’ll be okay,” Henry promised, rubbing her back. “It’ll be okay.”

“Yeah, Regina, it’ll be okay. You’ll see. It’s probably nothing,” Emma said with an awkward laugh.
It did not look like nothing and it probably was not labor. Something was seriously wrong here.

“Why? Why keep doing this to me?” Regina coughed, still hiding her face in her hands. “I tried. I tried and still this. Why?”

Henry looked at Emma. “What’s she…?”

Emma shook her head. She had no idea what was going on with Regina. But, she wanted to make everything all right, so she drove as quickly as she could without being reckless and got them to Doctor Alexander’s hospital. They pulled Regina out of the car and Doctor Alexander met them just inside. The doctor took charge of Regina.

“Stay with your mom while I get the car into a real parking spot,” Emma told Henry. She had parked the car right in front of the hospital, which was quite illegal regardless of the fact that she was the sheriff.

Emma did not even stay around for Henry to nod. Vomit burned her throat and she panted as she went back to the car. She had to take a deep breath, trying to steady herself. Her hands shook, so she gripped the wheel tighter, until her knuckles were bone white, as she drove the Bug into the nearest parking spot.

“Okay, God, I know I stopped praying a very long time ago, but what the fuck, man? Can we just have this one thing? I mean, haven’t our lives been shitty enough? We’ve done pretty good work lately, so can we please just have this one thing? I mean, please?” Emma prayed. She knew prayer should go way different, but she was out of practice and her nerves were shot. She just needed Regina and the baby to be all right.

Taking a breath, she looked at the sky for a moment and then got out of the car. She found Henry easily and sat down next to him on a couch in the hospital waiting area. He wasted no time leaning into her and she wrapped her arms around him. He pressed himself to her, as if burrowing inside of her for strength, confidence, and love.

Emma was surprised by the lack of antiseptic scent. Storybrooke General always smelled like someone was sterilizing it. The couch and waiting area almost seemed like a hotel lobby. None of the comfort helped her. Emma still felt like she was drowning.

“They didn’t tell me what was wrong with her,” Henry whispered, his eyes haunted.

Emma kissed his head and caressed his scalp. “Right now, they’re probably trying to figure out what’s wrong with her. They’ll give us news. Her doctor is pretty good and forthcoming with stuff.”

“You sure?”

“Yeah.”

“Should we call Grams and Gramps? They’ll want to know, right?”

Emma sighed. “Yeah, they will.” They would want to be supportive and Emma would like the support. She needed a buoy. So, she texted them. She did not feel up to having a conversation right now.

Henry took a breath. “You think the baby’s okay? She was holding her stomach for a while, right?”

“We’ll find out. If that baby is anything like her, though, it’s fine. Nothing stops your mother and I doubt there’s anything that can stop someone your mom is carrying. It’ll be okay.” Emma hoped
Henry sniffled. “Do you think… do you think this is like punishment for our lives?”

Emma blinked. How the hell did Henry read her thoughts like that? Worse, how did her thirteen year old son have the same jaded outlook at her? She rubbed his head again and squeezed him close.

“No, Henry, I don’t think that. First off, you haven’t done anything that warrants punishment, especially from some unseen force.”

He scoffed. “I was so mean to Mom.” A tear slid down his cheek.

She wiped the tear, but more followed. She cupped her poor son’s face. “Yeah, but she forgave you for that and even admits you were just a little justified in your outlook. You’re not being punished.”

He wiped his face with both hands and sniffled. “Is Mom being punished then?”

She took a deep breath, clutching his shoulder. “No, kid. Sometimes, there are just complications in pregnancies. This might not even be one of them. It might be nothing. But, this is one of the reasons I didn’t want you to do research by yourself. I didn’t want you to get freaked out over the things that could go wrong. I mean, don’t get me wrong, you’re mature as shit, but some things you shouldn’t have to worry about as a teenager. I want you to be a kid and your mom wants you to be a kid, too. We had to grow up a lot sooner than we should have and we don’t want that for you.”

Henry nodded. “I know.”

“It’ll be okay, Henry.” It needed to be okay.

They were silent for a long while, just holding each other. David and Snow came with baby Neal and just joined the cuddle ball. Somehow, the Lil Bit even knew to hug Emma extra-tight. She loved that little guy so much. Not too long after her family showed up, Doctor Alexander came out. Snow sort yelped when she saw the woman.

“You’re Regina’s doctor?” Snow asked with a frown.

“I suppose she approved of me a little more than your father did, not that it matters,” the doctor replied in a clipped tone.

“Is Regina okay?” Emma asked as she climbed to her feet. It was clear Doctor Alexander and her mother had some history, but Emma did not care about that. Henry followed her up and stayed tucked in close.

“The baby?” Henry chimed in.

The doctor waved them off. “Both mother and child are fine. Regina just needs rest. She stressed herself out and worked herself up into a frenzy, which only made matters worse. She has a knot on the back of her head with a small gash, but it’ll heal on its own. Her blood pressure is too high, but not enough for me to keep her.”

“So, she can go home?” Emma asked.

“I’m discharging her into your very capable hands. I trust you’ll get her to relax more than the nurses here will, considering she’s already threatened three of them. They’re now doing rock, scissors, paper to see who has to go in there and I’m fairly certain she’s looking for a weapon. So, for all our sakes, take her home and chill her out,” Doctor Alexander replied.
“I can do that.”

“We can do that.” Henry pointed to himself and Emma.

“Also, watch her intake of sweets. Once I got her to calm down, all she kept asking for was for you to bring her donuts,” Doctor Alexander replied.

Emma chuckled a bit, feeling bubbles in her chest. “We watch her intake, don’t worry. Donuts are just for when she’s had a really bad day, like today.”

“Keep an eye on her blood pressure. As I said, it’s elevated, which couldn’t be helped considering how worked up she was, but it was the main reason she felt so terrible and thought something had gone wrong. From what she tells me, it was probably high all day and she tried to ignore the symptoms. If anything seems too much, though, call me. The last thing we need for her to do is have a stroke. I’ve already scheduled her for a follow up appointment in a week.”

Emma nodded, putting her hands in her back pockets. “Sounds fine.”

“Then I’ll see you then. Let me go check on my patient once more and make sure she understands the conditions of her discharge.” Doctor Alexander walked off. Henry and Emma both breathed loud sighs of relief.

“You know Regina’s doctor?” Emma asked, looking at her mother.

Snow frowned. “She was Regina’s midwife.”

“Mom’s midwife?” Henry echoed.

“You don’t seem too friendly with her,” Emma noted. She liked Regina’s doctor, so she did not see what her mother had against her.

“My father eventually released her from the castle’s service. He thought…” Snow shook her head. “Let Regina tell you.”

Emma nodded, suspecting this had something to do with the secret Snow almost dropped before. She would worry about that later. Right now, she was just happy she would be able to take Regina home. She put her arm around Henry and gave him a one-armed hug. He relaxed into her.

“See, not a punishment,” Emma said and Henry nodded. Surely the universe was done with Regina by now.

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Next time: Regina tries to start an argument, but it leads to her opening up about the secret Snow’s been keeping.
18: Sickness and Health

Regina was in bed, reading, relaxing, like she was supposed to be. Emma was surprised she did not have to force or bribe Regina to stay in bed. Once Emma and Henry got Regina home from the hospital, she had retired to bed without a word or a struggle. It was a little worrisome and Emma hoped a little bowl of ice cream would help Regina open up.

“I didn’t put chocolate syrup on it. You shouldn’t have too much sugar,” Emma said as she eased into bed next to Regina.

“And who has been just feeding my habit?” Regina pointed out.

Emma smiled. “Just trying to keep you happy, barefoot, and pregnant.”

She eased the bowl into Regina’s hands and kissed Regina’s cheek. Regina smiled a little and put her book down. She stirred her ice cream a little, preferring it in a creamy form. Emma had to look away when Regina took the first spoonful. The way Regina ate anything with a spoon had to be considered porn in some places. It definitely did naughty things to Emma’s body. It did not help that Regina had on her sexy glasses.

“So, my mom and your doctor know each other and don’t seem to like each other,” Emma said. Wait, why did I lead with that? Because you want answers, damn it! How long did she have to wait for things to make sense to her? How long did she have to wait for Regina to let her all the way in?

Regina made a noise between a grunt and a moan with the spoon still in her mouth. “I’m sure they don’t. The King fired her from my service.”

“So Mom said. She also said that the doctor was your midwife,” Emma said, hoping Regina would finally open up with her. Instead, Regina just grunted. Emma sighed. “Regina, tell me what’s going on. You came in crying, bawling really, saying you knew this would happen and how you tried, like you knew something would go wrong with the pregnancy or with the baby.” Has she been waiting for that?

Regina sighed, eyes focused on the blanket. “Can I just enjoy my ice cream?” Her voice was an odd mix of annoyed and pleading.

Emma growled, but swallowed her frustration. I can’t get her stressed. I have to let her relax, but I don’t want to let her push me around. What more did she have to do, though, to show she was there for Regina? “Regina, what more do you want from me? Why won’t you share?”
“You want ice cream, too?” There was no snap, no cuteness, nothing in the question.

“You, I love you and I want to be here for you through everything, but you have to let me.”

Regina blinked. “Excuse me?” She studied Emma, tension in her face.

“What?” Emma arched an eyebrow. What was the problem now?

“You… love me?” Regina said the words as if she was speaking another language, like she did not understand.

“Yes, I love you. You think I’m here with you for my health?” If that was the case, she would have died months ago, starved for affection.

Regina placed her bowl on top of her book on the nightstand and glared Emma down, almost like when they first met. “Are you insane? Why would you love me? Look at what happens to people who love me. The only thing that follows me is death, pain, and suffering, especially for those who carry any bit of affection for me. Why are you even bothering?”

Emma glared right back. *What the hell is her problem?* “Because I love you. I thought you knew that, understood that. We’ve been through a lot. We share a son. We’re a family. You said that. You’re always here for me, no matter how stupid I act and no matter how dangerous the situation. Why wouldn’t I love you? Why wouldn’t I bother? We’ve got another kid on the way.”

Regina scowled. “We?” She hissed the word, like she was trying to slice Emma in two with the simple repeat.

Emma bit her lip and her throat seized. “Oh, so you’re going to act like this isn’t my damn kid? Like I haven’t been here from day one since you found out? Like…” Emma took a deep breath and let it out slowly. “No, you know what? We’re not doing this. I’m not doing this. I’m not going to stress you out more after what happened today.” The last thing she needed was Regina blaming her if she ended up in the hospital and something went wrong with the baby, no matter how damned indifferent Regina wanted to act about their kid.

Regina sneered. “How chivalrous of you.”

“Yeah, and I’m not going to get into a fight with you, so you can kick me out and then blame me for not being here for you or whatever the hell your plan is. You’re driving me away, just so you can say I always run or something. This is my forever family. You said so. I’m here and I’m staying. So, you know what, eat your ice cream, read your book, and wake me up if you need anything, but I’m going to sleep.” She was way too exhausted to let Regina sabotage them right now. Emma crawled under the covers and turned her back to Regina.

“Don’t you dare go to sleep,” Regina snarled.

“Or you’ll destroy my happiness? Thanks, but the hospital visit did that already,” Emma replied.

“Emma,” Regina’s voice was hard, clearly spoiling for a fight.

Emma did not give in. She had her own emotions to sort through. She was not about to bother with being Regina’s punching bag. It never occurred to her that she could lose Regina or the baby during this whole thing. Now, she wondered how close they had come. What would she do without Regina? What would she do if they lost this kid she already loved with all her heart? She had no desire to find out.
Eventually, Emma heard the spoon scrape the bottom of the bowl, so maybe finishing the ice cream had helped Regina cool off. The light on the nightstand was turned off and the room was engulfed in darkness. Emma closed her eyes, about to really go to sleep and then she felt Regina’s stomach against her.

Regina was trying to spoon, but it was almost impossible for Regina to be the big spoon with her stomach. Her arm barely reached around to Emma. Emma knew the position was not comfortable for Regina. She should be snuggled up with her maternity body pillow.

“You’ll never fall asleep like this,” Emma said as she turned around. She was met by sorrowful brown eyes that she could just barely see in the dark. “Regina…” She brought her hand up, wiping away a tear.

“I’m going to update my will. I want you to take care of the baby. Maybe we could see if you can do a second parent adoption, even though the baby hasn’t been born yet.” Regina’s eyes went wide and she gasped. “We might have to do that with Henry, too. I never bothered to check your legal status with him.”

Emma rubbed Regina’s shoulder as Regina’s breathing increased. “Regina, calm down. You need to stay calm. You’re not going to die anytime soon, so you don’t have to worry.”

Regina shook her head rapidly. “You don’t know that. You don’t know that.” Her breath came in pants, sucking in air like she nearly drowned, and she looked around the room, like she needed something in that very moment, but could not find it.

Emma shifted, pulling Regina close to her and rubbing her side. “Talk to me, Regina. Tell me what’s wrong. Why are you panicking?”

“Because I thought this would be different, but it’s not different. I thought things would go… better. They seemed better, but it’s not. I thought…” Regina’s mouth trembled and she shook her head.

“What are you talking about? What did you think was different?”

Regina took a deep breath and focused on Emma’s eyes. Soon, her panting turned into shuddering breaths, but not fast enough to cause alarm. “I’m shocked your mother hasn’t blurted it out yet.”

“I think I’ve stopped her, but tell me what’s wrong. What’s going on with you? Does it have anything to do with you saying you knew something would happen or why you’ve been so detached from the pregnancy? Just talk to me, please.” Emma gave her a gentle squeeze.

Regina turned to rest on her back and stare at the ceiling. There was a long stretch of silence and for a few tense moments, Emma thought Regina was not going to say anything. Why won’t she let me in all the way?

“I’ve been pregnant before,” Regina whispered. Tears at the corner of her eye glinted in the moonlight filtering in the room.

“I thought that might be the case, but I thought I was being crazy. I mean, I figured if you’ve been pregnant before you probably wouldn’t have adopted Henry.” Not to mention, there was no mini-Regina running around, except Henry, who was definitely his mother.

Regina sniffed and let out a long breath. “I’ve never carried to term.”

Emma blinked and her heart sank in her chest. “Oh, god! You thought you lost the baby today.” That was why Regina broke down and banged her head against the wall repeatedly. Emma thought
Regina had lost her mind and probably was not far off.

Regina swallowed so hard, Emma saw her throat move and heard it. “There’s still so much time left and I’ve been down this road enough times to know it ends in tragedy. This will only be worse because you and Henry have become so attached. There’s a nursery and so many things waiting…” Tears poured down her cheeks, dripping off of her chin.

Emma wiped away the tears with tender care, even though they were quickly replaced by new ones. “Regina, the baby’s fine.” She stroked Regina’s stomach to prove her point.

Tears blazing down her face and her nose running, Regina shook her head. “There’s still so much time and there’s been so much attention and so many people are already invested. You’re all going to be heartbroken. I tried. I really tried, but it doesn’t matter. It never matters.” Her voice was a broken whisper.

Emma reached for Regina, wanting to pull her as close as possible, wanting to hold Regina as close as possible. Regina, who was in mourning for a child who was still very much alive. Regina, who was mourning the loss of at least one child. I’ve never carried to term sounded like more than one, though.

“Regina, talk to me.”

Regina sucked in air and held it for a long time, longer than Emma thought was wise. Once she released it, she hiccuped. Emma moved her hand to rub Regina’s back.

“Take your time, babe.” Emma hoped the term of endearment did not piss Regina off just now.

Regina took another breath. “I had a son, Emma.” She sounded so small, shattered.

“You had a son.”

Regina wiped her eyes with the back of her hand, but it did nothing to stop her from crying. “Well, not really. He only made it to five months and then I miscarried…” Regina’s bottom lip trembled. “I had been so sick while I was pregnant with him, sicker than I had ever been in my life. I could hardly move. I couldn’t keep any food down. Everything hurt all the time, even my teeth. I was feverish, suffered from delusions and fever dreams often. Rumple may or maybe not have appeared to me, urging me to heal myself. To show my power and heal myself or the King would win.”

Emma’s face scrunched up. “Do you think it really was him?”

“I don’t think I’ll ever know. I was too weak to do anything. He had been trying to get me to practice magic then, but there were just too many delusions at the time for me to know for sure. I know I tried my magic. I tried it and…” A sob shook Regina’s small body. “I didn’t know. I didn’t know.”

Emma nodded. Did Regina try to practice magic while pregnant and sick and…? Emma sniffled and pulled Regina closer. Regina thought it affected the pregnancy.

“It wasn’t your fault,” Emma whispered and kissed the top of Regina’s head. “It wasn’t your fault.”

“I was so miserable through it all. I wanted a quick fix and couldn’t even get that. I was stupid, but still…” Regina took a deep breath. “Part of me was happy…” her voice cracked.

“Happy?” Emma was shocked to hear that. She understood the pregnancy might have been terrible, but she could not imagine someone like Regina being okay with losing her child, no matter how sick she had been. What if she didn’t mean the pregnancy was miserable? Now, Emma felt sick. Regina
meant her life had been so miserable.

Regina nodded. “Yes, happy. I didn’t… I didn’t want anything from King Leopold, especially not his child. Through all the sickness, I remembered every single time he touched me, every single moment that led up the pregnancy. I didn’t want him to be able to control even that part of me. So, a part of me was happy, but not for long. Because he… he was more than Leopold. He was mine. He was me and he was gone.” She choked on a sob. Bring her hand up to wipe her nose, she was strangled by her wails and made noises that she hid in her pillow.

“I’m sorry.”

Regina sniffled and looked back at Emma. Her face was a mess. “No one knew. The whole court just thought I had been sick, which was very true. Before we learned of the pregnancy, I had been the sickest, pale, sweating, like Death was just over my shoulder. The night we found out, I had fainted at a party, carried out by the guards, covered in sweat to the point it soaked through my ballgown. The court saw and knew, thought me deathly ill. Some even expected me to die soon and were already trying to pawn their daughters off to Leopold, parading about the palace as if it was their home, as if I were dead. I wish I was. I truly wish I was.”

Emma was not sure what to say to that. She just held Regina as if it was the only thing that would keep them alive. Regina’s body shook as she cried more, muffling her voice in Emma’s neck. The noise burned through Emma, each tear like a fiery ember, branding her soul.

“I’m glad you aren’t,” Emma said.

Regina licked her lips. “Up until recently, there were always quiet moments when I think back then and still wish I had died. It would’ve been better. I killed my son. I was happy he was dead.”

“You didn’t kill him, Regina. It wasn’t your fault.”

“I destroy everything.” It was said with such scorching, white-hot certainty.

Emma kissed Regina’s forehead, hoping to somehow heal Regina of all these torrid emotions. “I know life is hard, but I hope it’ll get a little easier for you.”

“It has.”

Emma kissed the top of Regina’s head again. Regina curled into her as best she could. Emma figured Regina needed a minute, which was fine with her. As long as Regina opened up, she could take as long as she needed. But, Regina needed to get it all out. She needed to let go of the agony of the past, like she urged Emma to do. Regina took a few deep breaths and stared at the ceiling for a long moment before her eyes found Emma’s again.

“Doctor Alexander—then my midwife—told me that my body wasn’t ready for the baby. I’m not entirely sure what she meant and she was probably trying to be kind in her wording, but she was very plain that it was dangerous for me to be pregnant.”

Emma’s throat felt tight and she swallowed, hoping to loosen it. The swallow hit her stomach like a brick. “Dangerous?” Have I put Regina in danger for the baby? No, this was Regina’s decision and Doctor Alexander has never said Regina was in danger from the baby.

“Yes. She was surprised I survived it. She came up with a special diet for me, gave me herbs to heal, and suggested exercises to aid in my recovery, but there were tougher roadblocks ahead of her.”

Emma did not even get a chance to consider why Regina might have survived. Had the magic saved
her? Killed the baby? Luck? “Tougher? The King?”

Regina nodded. “Bianca—Doctor Alexander—she knew he wanted children from me. He was King, after all, and he was upset over the loss of his son. At first, he didn’t want to hear anything she had to say, mostly because she wanted him to not touch me for a long time. He didn’t want that. He wanted a child. She convinced the King my body was weak and he should leave me be to recover or he would be risking my life and the life of any child I could conceive. She saved me from his bed and his attention for a year.”

“From his attention? What, if he couldn’t bed you, he didn’t care?” Emma scowled. What a fucking scumbag. Her brain reminded her that was her grandfather and she found herself unmoved. A scumbag was a scumbag no matter who he was related to.

Regina shook her head. “Not exactly. I was still expected to appear on his arm, of course, but we had little interaction beyond formalities and even then, he poured all of his attention into Snow.”

“Which is when you were left feeling alone in a room full of people.”

“Yes, and while it was terrible, I preferred him to pay attention to Snow than to me.”

Emma could understand that. “Did she know she almost had a brother?”

“Yes, she knew. Just… a different brother.”

Emma inhaled sharply. “You got pregnant again?” How could he just not care? He was risking her life and he did it anyway?

“He stayed away for a year, which was longer than I would’ve imagined. It was a blessing.”

Emma frowned. “I don’t get it. I mean, the stupid book makes it seem like the King married you as like a reward for saving Snow or something.”

“Well, I’m sure that was part of it, but make no mistake, no king marries a teenage girl and doesn’t expect children in the deal. Yes, he loved Snow with all his heart, but he would not turn down another heir. It was always best to be safe than sorry. Children didn’t survive and thrive there the same way they do here and wars popped up often, taking those who managed to survive childhood.”

“I guess I can understand that, but he was willing to risk your life for another kid? The storybook also makes it sound like he was a good guy. I mean, whenever Snow talks about him in the book, it sounds good. He sounds good, but he wasn’t thinking about you at all.” Emma stroked Regina’s cheek with her thumb. It was wet and hot and Emma wanted to do everything in her power to make everything okay.

Regina sighed. “You can be a good father and a good monarch, but not a good husband, especially when your wife doesn’t want you and especially when she’s more of a bauble than a person.”

“You sound awfully understanding, which isn’t like you.” She never would have thought Regina would give someone she killed credit for being good at anything.

“I’m trying to let the anger go, Emma. I thought you’d encourage that.”

Emma smiled a little and ran her fingers through Regina’s hair. “I do. You should. It doesn’t do you any good.” But, I’m damned pissed at the bastard right now.

“No, it doesn’t. Besides, while I was the Evil Queen, piling up bodies and making vast killing fields,
I also grew the country’s economy by leaps and bounds and created a very wealthy merchant class, so not totally bad at the job. I understand there are parts of being a leader and also parts of being a person. Besides, the bastard was a good father, even I can admit that.”

_Why not? We can admit Regina was a good mother and bat shit crazy, too._ “But, you didn’t want his child.”

Regina sniffed. “I wanted nothing from him. For such a long time, all I ever wanted was freedom, a chance to be myself, whoever she might be. I’m not even sure what freedom meant beyond being able to make a decision for myself. I thought I could do that with Daniel. We all know how that turned out. So, I went from my mother to my husband, like proper Enchanted Forest chattel. I was his to do with as he pleased and it pleased him to have a child by me. I was slower to conceive the second time. I think my body was trying its best to reject him.”

“You miscarried again?”

“I did. Another son. I was almost six months along. I wasn’t as sick, but I was sick and weak. Bianca did what she could, hoping to get me through, but things were bleak. I couldn’t even muster magic at the best of times.”

“More fever dreams of Gold?”

Regina nodded. “Yes, but I’m almost certain those were dreams. Again, I’ll never be totally sure if he was there or not. I’ll never be totally certain if he wanted me to feel the pain of losing my children to help me along my path. It doesn’t matter. They’re gone.”

Again, Emma caressed her cheek. “It does matter. They were your babies and you can hold them in your heart. You can cherish them.”

Regina shook her head, like she disagreed. There were so many scars on her heart, yet she still loved. Sure, it was cautious and quiet in some many ways, but it was there and just as big as any person Emma could think of. “The court still had whispers that I might die and they knew of my pregnancy if they had proper spies or could get the princess to do what she does best. Snow came to visit me, so she was aware of the pregnancy that time. Her visits were… irritating at best.”

“She did a lot of her speaking without thinking, didn’t she?” Emma could almost see the inappropriate things coming out her mother’s mouth. She noticed it was fairly bad habit of her mother’s. She could be self-righteous, self-absorbed, and condescending. She claimed she would work on it when Emma spoke to her and David during their talk in that quiet six weeks, but it might just be part of Snow’s personality.

Regina sucked her teeth, which did not have the usual bite to it. “I would think your mother likes the taste of her own foot, but I’m sure she’s oblivious she’s ever put the damn thing in her mouth. As I lay in the bed after having to watch my dead child wrapped in a bloody blanket never to be seen again, your mother assures me it’s fine because I still have her. Just what I needed to hear.” She could not be more deadpan if she were actually dead.

Emma caressed Regina’s cheek, brushing more tears aside. “She was a kid, Regina.”

“I can’t imagine Henry saying this and he’s only a year older than your mother when she uttered that drivel.”

Emma winced and decided against defending her mother. Her mother’s heart was always in the right place, but her words always seemed to take a left turn and leave ruin in her wake. Emma kissed
Regina’s forehead, wishing that could make everything better.

“The midwife once again told the King my body needed to recover and since he had lost two sons, he took her serious. Two years without having to feel him inside of me, tearing at me, pawing me. Two years without having to feel his body against mine, two years without having to feel his breath against my cheek, two years of not having to feel his scratchy hair against me, two years of not having to hear him moan for Eva as I held back tears.”

Emma never thought about it, but realized Regina had to endure years of sexual abuse. Maybe Regina did not look at it that way, as it was just the way of the Enchanted Forest. But, surely since coming to this realm and understanding her own hurt a little more, Regina had to know she had been traumatized by more than Daniel’s death and the stillbirths.

Now, Emma understood why Regina never had sex for pleasure or just for the connection with someone. Young Regina probably never had a chance to be with her stable boy. Her first sexual experience was with the King and she had to endure his pleasure for years. For her, sex was about control, being in charge, not about affection.

“Regina…” Emma felt a tear fall from her eye.

Regina brushed the tear away with her thumb and gave Emma a quick kiss. “Don’t cry. It’s over.”

“But, it’s not. That’s the thing. It’s not over. This stuff still affects you, still hurts you, and I hate it. I just want to take all your pain away. I want to make it all better.”

Regina shook her head and gave Emma another gentle kiss. “It took years for me to conceive again, over three years. I had to put up with wild rumors from his court. Nobles whispering about how I was defective and that was what the King got for marrying a foreigner.”

“Foreigner?” Emma echoed. *There’s racism in the Enchanted Forest?* It never even occurred to her that Regina was not originally from there.

“Yes, I was from a neighboring country and his kingdom never thought too highly of us, calling us savages and found many of our customs odd. They assumed my grandfather to be a fool of a king and perhaps they were right, as he managed to thoroughly ruin our economy and left his poor son to fight a civil war that was almost impossible to win. My father fled the chaos, taking me and my mother to his country estate. The King happened through our land after a diplomatic mission when we all stumbled across each other. It was just one of many things the court hated about me. Of course, my mother being a witch didn’t help.”

“And you had to deal with years of that?”

“Yes, years.”

“Regina…” Emma wanted to say so much, but had no idea what words to use. Were there words for something like this?

“It’s all right.”

Emma ran her fingers through Regina’s hair and cupped the back of her head. “It’s not all right. You’ve been through so much.”

“I have, but I survived.”

Emma gave her a soft, lingering kiss, wishing it could somehow heal her. “You did. And that’s
what’s important.”

“Really? I assumed this story you wanted to hear was important as well.”

“Of course it is. What happened next?”

Regina sighed. “I made it to seven months. The furtherest I had ever been. I wasn’t nearly as sick as before, but Bianca was very watchful of me. Every pregnancy, she always expected it to be my end. The second one was close, as I lost quite a bit of blood during the miscarriage. I thought this third one would be fine, though. I thought it was going well. It was… well, it was a surprise when the pain hit me and then there was so much blood, so much.” Regina sniffled and there were fresh tears. Her hands drifted to her stomach and she rubbed the area. “I almost didn’t make it. I’m still not sure how I survived.”

Once again, Emma’s throat tightened and she had to swallow, feeling like she swallowed broken glass. “What happened?”

“Emma, I had a baby girl. She was… she was so tiny, but beautiful. She was so beautiful.” She sounded like bawling, even though there were no tears. It was like she was cried out.

“You got to see her?”

“Oh, Emma, I saw her, I held her, I even cooed at her.” Regina’s voice sounded so beyond shredded, like it was a miracle she could still talk. She looked down at her belly. “She was so beautiful. I held her for so long, just pressed to my chest. She had dark hair and practically my complexion. I stayed awake, not caring how close to death I was or how weak I felt. It was a struggle to breathe and every fiber of my being ached, but I refused to let them take her from me. I held her for two days. Two wonderful days, clutched to my breast. I named her Celestia, for she was heavenly. Eventually, I needed sleep, though. I was just too weak. When I awoke she was gone and I was out of mind. I had dreamed, imagined, craved for her to be alive and raged that they had taken her from me, that he had taken her from me.”

“What happened?” For a second, the way Regina had spoken about her, Emma thought the baby lived. But, of course that was impossible. Regina would have guarded such a child with her life.

“Of course he had taken her from me. How could he leave his queen clutching the corpse of a stillborn? I was in no shape to challenge him, beyond screaming how Celestia was not a stillborn. He rightfully thought I was out my head. But, how could I not be? My first victims…” Regina put her hand to her heart. “Emma, my first victims were my own children.”

Emma inhaled sharply and held Regina as best and as fiercely as she could. “No! You didn’t kill those babies, Regina. It wasn’t your fault.”

“That’s something you and the King might agree on. He released my midwife from her service. Well, he went a step beyond that and banished Bianca to outskirts of the kingdom.”

Emma’s brow furrowed. “Why would he do that?”

“He felt she was the reason I lost the babies. She was not properly taking care of me, according to him, but I was the one who was weak, who practiced magic, and who was happy to lose my first one just because I hated his father. The King didn’t know, though. He thought it was all on her. She wasn’t properly seeing to my health to make sure my body was prepared for my duty. I knew with her gone, it’d start again and the next midwife might not actually care about my health, only the health of possible heirs.”
Emma’s stomach twisted. “You mean he could’ve hired someone who’d let you die just to carry to term?”

“Yes. Bianca cared about my health and she knew my body wasn’t fit for… this…” Regina rubbed her stomach. “I understand that. My body…” She shook her head. “She knew one day it would come down to me or the baby. If the baby had a chance to survive, we all know who I’d save and who the King would’ve saved. She tried to make it so it wouldn’t come to that, but then again, she was skeptical I would conceive again after the second stillborn.”

“But, she tried to help by convincing the King not to touch you.”

“She did. He allowed me to recover for a year, but then I could see he wanted me again. I refused.” There was grit in her voice, reminding Emma of the Evil Queen.

Emma knew how the story ended there. She did not condone what Regina did, but she understood. Part of her hated that she understood. After all, the man was her grandfather. But, she did not know him and the more she learned about him, the more she was glad to not know him.

“Will you leave now? Knowing what I did?” Regina asked in a tone so tiny it broke Emma’s heart.

“Regina, you didn’t do anything. You didn’t cause any of that. You were probably too weak and sick to do any real magic, so that probably wasn’t even a factor.”

“You’re just making excuses.”

“Never. It wasn’t your fault. You need to know that. It wasn’t your fault.”

Regina buried her face in Emma’s neck and wept again. Her crying was silent this time. Had anyone ever bothered to tell Regina it was not her fault she lost three babies? Doctor Alexander probably did, but how much was that worth from court gossip? And who the hell knew what the King said to Regina.

“I wish I could’ve protected you,” Emma said, running her fingers through Regina’s hair.

“I learned to protect myself. Well, I thought I had.” Regina rubbed her stomach once more and sighed. “This one has made it the furthest with the least amount of problems. I know better than to hope now. I was a fool to think this could go any different. It’s either him or me. At least, I know if he makes it, he’ll have you and Henry to take care of him and you’ll let him know about me—the good about me.”

Emma shook her head. “You shouldn’t think like that. Has Doctor Alexander said anything to make you think you’re in danger?” She knew the answer to that, but she needed Regina to say it, so Regina could remind herself, so Regina could stop treating the pregnancy as a death sentence for one of them.

“No, but she said plenty back in the Enchanted Forest.”

“That was the Enchanted Forest. This is here and there’s so many things different.”

“Oh?”

“Yeah, you said so yourself. For example, you have me and you have Henry. You didn’t have us before and we’re here for you. Did you have that kind of support there?” Emma doubted it, but it was something else she needed Regina to realize it.
“Of course not. The King barely spoke to me when I was available for his bed. Once I was pregnant, there was nothing for him to even try to engage in. I had servants, but they’re not family and I knew they reported back to him. I knew I had to keep quiet.”

“Right. Well, I’m not him. And, yes, the sex with you is awesome, but I’m here for you. If we never had sex again, I’d definitely be sad about it, but I wouldn’t leave. We’ve got two kids and you’ve kinda grown on me at this point.”

Regina sniffed and laughed. “You’ve become like a skin condition I can’t get rid of and I’ve learned to live with.”

Emma hugged Regina. “Thank you. My point is, you have us. You’ve got support and love and people who care. You saw that at the baby shower and, come on, I’m here.”

“I know.”

“So, you’ve been so… aloof with the baby because you thought you’d lose junior?” Emma asked.

Regina sighed. “It’s still possible. Why get attached? I don’t… I don’t want to hold another dead baby, Emma.”

Emma caressed Regina’s stomach and rested her hand on Regina’s. “But, junior is alive and well. Junior’s healthy. Doctor Alexander always says so and now I understand why. She always makes it a point for you to know everything is going good with the pregnancy because she wants you to have hope. She’s confident you have this one. You’re healthy, which is why you were allowed to go home tonight. You haven’t been sick. You haven’t used magic. Everything has been going right and smooth. It’ll be fine, so don’t talk to me about rewriting your will or if I have legal custody of Henry… No, you know what, that last one might actually be important. For the year you were gone, I did have legal custody of Henry. Did all of your legal documents come back with the Second Curse?”

Regina nodded. “Yes, everything. Do your documents still exist?”

“Yeah, I had a friend mail me everything from New York.”

“Perhaps we could do this the same as any Enchanted Forest couple. We just agree to both sets of documents and they should therefore be legal. Henry is, therefore, both our son. I’ll call Kathryn in the morning.” Regina said.

“Okay.”

“But, I’m still going to update my will and we should still see about second parent adoption. You are this baby’s parent in every sense of the word, so we might as well make it legal and I want you to be able to provide for both of our children should something happen to me.”

Emma smiled. “All right, but you should know I plan to parent right along side of you.”

“I wouldn’t have it any other way, but you should be realistic, Emma. Maybe we should talk to Henry as well.”

“No, Regina. We are not going to freak him out with talks of you possibly dying. You trust your doctor, right?”

“Yes.”
“She says everything’s okay. Until she says otherwise, we’re not going to tell Henry you might die. That’ll freak him out.” Hell, it was freaking Emma out and she was almost certain it would not happen. Doctor Alexander had cautioned her about many things in Regina’s pregnancy and she had taken them to heart. Every visit was met with positive words and encouragement. Everything seemed to be going swimmingly, but now Emma thought about how easily she might lose Regina.

Regina sighed, eyes drifting to the mattress for a moment. “I just… I want him to be ready in case…”

“In case nothing. Look, we’ve held off imminent doom on more than one occasion. We beat a man-god-boy-thing. There’s nothing that can stop us. We’ve got this, Regina.”

Regina took a deep breath. “I hope you’re right.”

“I am. Now, let’s go to sleep and tomorrow we’ll relax a little together. It’ll be fine, okay?”

Regina did not argue. She turned a little, so she could settle against her body pillow. Emma assumed her usual position of big spoon with her hand tucked just underneath Regina’s belly. Listen here, kid, you better be okay and you better not hurt your mom. We’re trying to be a family. We’re good, a little broken, but still good.

-8-8-8-8-

Next time: Regina has the baby.
“You keep doing this,” Regina growled at Emma. She turned her back and waddled to the kitchen. Emma had to keep in a snicker from her spot in the living room. Whenever they fought now and Regina tried to make an explosive getaway, all Emma could think about were penguins. If Regina knew, there would be hell to pay.

“I’ll go get the papers tomorrow,” Emma replied, chasing after Regina. Well, not really chasing. All she needed to do was walk at a normal pace and she could catch Regina. Such is life when you’re carrying around Dumbo, I guess. She tried to keep a close eye on Regina now since she was not very mobile, just in case an enemy decided now was a good time for revenge. So far, no one had been quite so stupid. She had glared a few people down, though, when they got too close.

“You keep saying that!” Regina roared, turning to glower at Emma with the fires of Hell in her gaze. It would work a bit better if Regina’s face was not so full now and she was glowing. She was so damned adorable!

“Babe, stop. You know it’s not good for you to get worked up.” Since the hospital scare, Emma had gone above and beyond in keeping Regina calm. She was on her best behavior, made sure Henry was on his best behavior, and got her parents in on the mix to keep them from saying the wrong thing.

“Then, why don’t you just go get the damned adoption papers and stop getting me worked up?” Regina huffed.

“I’ll get to them. I just got busy.” Well, Emma forced herself to get busy. The idea of going to pick up the papers for the second parent adoption frightened her. Frightened her in ways she could not explain. It was like admitting Regina would die having the baby. She did not want Regina to die and some childish part of her seemed to think if she did not get the papers, then Regina would be fine.

“You’ve been ‘busy’ for almost two weeks now. I’m going to have Kathryn hand deliver them to you and watch you sign them,” Regina said.

Emma waved her hands. “No, you have to keep showing Kathryn the ropes for being mayor. I’ll get the damn papers. I promise.”

Regina puffed out her cheeks and a chipmunk popped into Emma’s head. Regina was going to kill her if she ever voiced some of these thoughts. “You’ve been making that promise for two weeks. I’m tired of hearing it. If I have to drive over there myself and pick them up, I will.”

“You don’t have to do that.” They both knew Emma did not want Regina doing anything extra. The baby could come any day now with Regina being thirty-seven weeks. She was exhausted all the time and could only stand for a few minutes at a time. Emma did not want her to wear herself out. So, her
day consisted of going to work, teaching Kathryn her job for a few hours, and coming home. Emma drove her and picked her up, making sure she had healthy snacks in between.

“Then, you need to get those papers.”

Sighing, Emma hung her head and decided to end the argument. It was not like she could tell Regina she was scared to do the papers, like it was admitting defeat. She wanted the baby to be hers in every aspect, but she would rather sign the second parent adoption when the baby arrived. She went to the living room and collapsed on the sofa, leaning on her knees and hiding her head in her hands. She was not sure how long she sat there, but she felt Regina come cuddle into her eventually.

“I made you a sandwich,” Regina said, rubbing her back.

“You didn’t have to,” Emma replied.

“I wanted to. I know I’m horrible at expressing myself in words, but I like to think with actions, I’m fairly good.”

Emma chuckled, turning to show Regina her smile. “You love me through feeding me?”

“I love you through trusting you with our children and you’re acting as if you do not want this baby. I know you do, so why aren’t you going through with the paperwork?” Regina asked. The word “baby” came to her so much easier now, ever since she told Emma about the others.

Emma sighed and looked at the sandwich waiting for her. It looked quite perfect, like everything Regina made. It was cut in half diagonally, as that was how Regina did it, all the time. She sniffled as she thought about the possibility of their new kid missing out on that. She thought about three kids who never got to experience Regina in “mom-mode” and her heart broke for them. It was not fair.

“Emma?” Regina said, putting her hand to Emma’s cheek, gently urging her to turn.

Emma stared at Regina. “What the hell would I do with two kids, Regina? How could I take care of them without you? How could I make lunches and change diapers and make sure they don’t forget they had this awesome mother I can’t live up to?” she asked, feeling a tear pour out of her eye.

Regina cooed and reached up, wiping away the tear. “You’d do it, Emma. I’ve seen you do the impossible. You saved Henry from a collapsed mine, pulled me out of a fire while I was trying to destroy you, survived my mother trying to pull your heart out, took care of Henry on your own in New York, and damn near became the Dark One to keep the Darkness from devouring me. You’d survive without me. You’re a survivor.”

Emma stared her right in the eye. “So are you.”

Regina nodded. “And I will fight. I will claw my way out of this if I can. You think I want to leave you, leave our children? No. But, in case things come to that, you have to be prepared. Putting it off doesn’t mean this might not happen. Do you honestly think Fate will go, ‘oh, Emma didn’t sign the papers, so I definitely can’t screw her and Regina over again.’ If anything, you’d be tempting Fate.”

Emma groaned, as that was the truth. With the way their lives worked, just to make everything worse, Regina would die and Emma would not have signed the second parent adoption papers and the poor kid would end up in the system. Or somehow Robin would be able to steal the kid. At least Henry was legally hers.

“I just… I feel like if I sign them…” Emma shook her head. It felt so ridiculous to admit aloud. Part of her even worried saying it out loud would cause Regina to make fun of her, or worse, it would
"You signing the papers will not kill me, Emma. If anything, my reproductive system will be the thing that kills me," Regina joked. In that moment, Emma could understand why Regina hated her jokes in stressful situations.

Emma shook her head again. "Can we not talk about you dying?"

"Then can you just sign the papers? I want you to be legally recognize as this child’s parent, whether I live or not. I want you to be this child’s mother legally. We all deserve that, yes?" Regina kept her voice quiet and patient, even though Emma knew she was fed up.

"Legal doesn’t mean everything."

Regina shifted and massaged Emma’s shoulders. "I know it doesn’t to us, but it means something to society. Even if I survive, you will still need to be this child’s legal parent for so many reasons that you are well aware of. So, will you please get the papers and sign them? There’s no guarantee that I’m going to make it to forty weeks, so every day you put this off is a day I could go into labor."

Emma sighed. It was all true. She could not ignore it and it was irresponsible to continue putting it off. She could not afford to be irresponsible and immature. She was about to be someone’s mother again and it was possible she would have to be a mother alone. Making sure to keep Regina close, Emma reached for her sandwich.

"I’ll do it tomorrow," Emma promised.

"Good." Regina nodded and cuddled in as close as possible. Emma put an arm around her.

They sat in silence for a little while with Emma eating her sandwich. It was simple, but it was so delicious. The right amount of turkey, cheese, mayo. She cut the tomato slices just the right size. It was perfect. *Our kid deserves to eat good sandwiches like this.* Regina busied herself by rubbing Emma’s knee, helping to calm her down.

"Did you put the baby seat in the car?" Regina asked.

"I did that a couple of days ago. We’re good to go. I know I’ve been lax with the papers, but everything else is good. Your bag is in the hall closet with everything you’ll need. We’ve got the baby’s travel outfit and things in the bag, too. I’ve got this."

Regina sighed contently and pressed just a little closer. "I know."

"Are you… scared?" Emma coughed and her chest hurt. She was so damned scared, so she knew Regina had to be.

"I’ve been afraid this entire time. But, not of dying. I’ve been afraid of missing you all. I’m scared I won’t get to see you and Henry playing with this one. I’m afraid I’ll miss out on first steps and first words. I’m afraid I’ll miss out on every single day of school. I’m afraid I won’t get to see Henry graduate, not just high school, but college. I’m afraid I’ll miss out on every single accomplishment I know you’ll all have over the years. The fear is fine, though. Those are the things pushing me through. I want to be here for those things… and for you."

Emma beamed and pressed her forehead against Regina’s. "I want you here."

Regina smiled back. "I know, Emma. I know. I’ve been difficult all these months, but it’s not because I’m trying to push you away. I’m just afraid. I don’t want you to get this idea in your head
that we’ll have this fairy tale ending, well, this Disney fairy tale ending. I hope like hell Hans Christian Anderson isn’t actually the author of our current ordeal.”

Emma grimaced, having researched all sorts of fairy tales, folk talks, and authors since learning the truth of Storybrooke. “Okay, never even suggest that again. Look, we’re in the ‘real world’ now. There’s no one writing a story about us. This is just life and we’ll make it through.”

“I want to not just coparent with you, Emma, and save this pathetic excuse of a town with you, but live life with you. I’ve only ever wanted this with Daniel.”

“Not even Robin?” I rank higher than her supposed soul mate? Wow. Emma’s heart swelled with happiness.

Regina shook her head. “I barely knew the man here and he got on my nerves in the Enchanted Forest, before I knew about his tattoo. What made him important was an idea, not him. Well, and his son is adorable.”

“Roland certainly does love the heck out of you.”

Regina smiled. “I gave him a lot of attention in the Enchanted Forest. I missed Henry and he’s so cute. He was easily amazed and liked to show off little things he could do. But, we’re off topic. Robin was an idea. You’re not an idea. You are you. I look forward to spending time with you, even when we were enemies. There was no one I’d rather have in my face.”

Emma chuckled. “I knew you were attracted to me then. You gave me way too much attention.”

Regina scoffed. “Don’t let it go to your head. But, the thought of you has kept me from falling into total despair. Your support has been everything in this pregnancy, Emma. I know you’re the reason why I haven’t been sick like my previous pregnancies. I know you’re the reason why this child is still kicking. You looked after me, after this baby, even when you didn’t have to, and I appreciate it. I’m thankful for you.”

Emma stiffened. No, she did not like the turn of the conversation, even though it really was not a turn. She just understood now why Regina was saying all of this.

“You’re not going to die, so save all emotional declarations for after the birth, thank you very much. Just like you haven’t been sick, this kid’s going to come out healthy and you’re going to make it through. In fact, we’re going go on a belated baby-moon in a few months. Okay, baby-moon.”

Regina arched an eyebrow. “Baby-moon?”

“It was something we should’ve done a few months ago, before the baby could come any day now. Just a way for us to enjoy some time alone.”

Regina nodded. “Fine. Let’s say we have one in six months to this day.”

“You sure?”

“If you sign those papers tomorrow.”


-8-8-8-8-

Regina had to have radar, Emma thought, as her phone went off. She had just signed the second
parent adoption papers and got them notarized. She just needed to file them, which she would do after she showed Regina. A proud grin settled on Emma’s face as she answered the call.

“If you’re checking in on me, I just finished getting the paperwork done,” Emma said, jutting her chin in the air, even though Regina could not see her.

“Good. Now, if you could make your way to the hospital,” Regina replied through gritted teeth.

“Hospital?” Emma stopped dead in her tracks.

“I’m in labor. Kathryn’s driving me. Go home and get the bag.”

“How are you so calm about this?” Emma rushed outside, looking for the car. A car. Any car! What the hell car did I drive here? Too many cars!

“Because I’m on my way to the hospital and will be there in three minutes while I’m sure you’re pacing like an idiot. It’s fine. Doctor Alexander is meeting us there later. Take a deep breath and go to the car.”

Emma nodded. “Regina, I don’t know what car I drove here.”

“Where are you?”

“I went to get the papers notarized.”

“Emma, sweetheart, you’re in Town Hall then. It’s the closest place to get something notarized. I’m surprised we didn’t see each other as I left. Just go back to the station and get my car. Go home, get the bag, and meet us at the hospital.”

Emma nodded and realized Regina was right. She had actually been on her way to Regina’s office to wave the papers around and show she got them signed. With that established, she rushed off back to the Sheriff’s office to get the car. She also let her father know what was happening.

“I’ll pick up Henry from school for you and bring him by,” David called.

Emma was already out the door. “Thank you!”

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“It’s okay. You’re okay. It’s okay,” Emma whispered to Regina, who was sobbing in her hospital bed. Emma held her and kissed her temple every few seconds, trying to assure Regina that it would be all right. There were no signs that the baby was in distress. Regina was just having very bad contractions.

“I hate this, I hate this, I hate this,” Regina cried.

“It’s okay. You’re okay,” Emma took Regina’s hand and held it.

Regina whined and Emma wiped Regina’s hair from her sweat drenched forehead. Regina had passed on any drugs to help with the birth, fearing they would somehow harm her or the baby. But, they had prepared for this, taking classes for natural childbirth after the whole town found out about the pregnancy and decided Emma was the cause. Seeing Regina now, how much pain she was in, Emma wished Regina changed her mind.

“You’re okay. We’re in the final stretch. You’re okay,” Emma said. She meant that beyond the fact that Regina was in labor. The doctor had sent everyone out of the room, unless they wanted to see a
live birth. Henry and David practically ran out of the room, but Emma had to almost throw her mother out.

Regina let loose a long, pained whine. A sob shook her body as she was ordered to push. Emma winced as Regina clutched her hand even tighter. *That might be broken.* Regina’s final cry was loud enough to shake the walls and Emma almost fell to her knees with the agony in her hand. *If it wasn’t broken before, it probably is now.* Emma forgot all about that as she watched Regina’s face when Doctor Alexander eased the baby into her arms.

“Congrats, mamas. You have a healthy, beautiful baby boy,” Doctor Alexander announced.

Emma was felt a little faint, staring at Regina and their son. They had another son. Regina was still crying, but holding the baby close to her chest and smiling. Her hair was plastered to her forehead and the vein in her forehead was in full display. The baby wailed, pressed close to his mother. Emma had never seen a more amazing, beautiful sight.

“You’re both so beautiful,” Emma said and she kissed the side of Regina’s head.

Regina laughed and turned, kissing Emma on the lips. Emma could not believe it. They had two sons. She had Regina. This was all so crazy, but in a good way. She was so happy.

“I want to call him Nathan. Is that okay?” Emma asked in a rush, like the moment might end and all of this could fade away.

Regina laughed again. “Of course. I said you could name him.”

“Nathan David then.” Emma blinked. “We didn’t decide on a last name.”

Regina shook her head. “Swan-Mills, of course.”

*My name. She wants my name there, too. He’s my son as much as hers.* Emma was not too sure what happened after that, but the next thing she knew, she had a swaddled son in her arms and her family was in the room, cooing over him. They were talking to her, but she could not figure out what they were saying. She had a baby son. A baby son that she named and who had her name.

“It’s a boy,” Emma found herself saying. She sounded awed to her own ears.

“Mom said. She also said you named him Nathan,” Henry replied.

Emma nodded. “Yeah. I wanted him to have a name as good as yours.”

Henry grinned. “So, you knew a guy named Nathan?” It was an easy guess since he knew he was named after the two most important men in Regina’s life.

“He saved my life a few times when I lived on the street, kept me from making some bad choices. He was a great guy. I don’t know what happened to him,” Emma replied.

“Then it’s a good name,” Henry said softly, like he was very aware how overwhelmed she was.

Emma smiled at him and moved to give him a one-armed hug. He patted her on the stomach, careful of his brother. She then sort of displayed Nathan to everyone. He was seven and a half pounds and nineteen inches. He was healthy and perfect as far as Emma was concerned.

“He looks kinda like an angry, pink version of you,” Henry said to Emma.

Emma rolled her eyes. “You were just as pink.” At least, in her second memories he was pretty pink.
She wondered if that was made up. She had not seen Henry as a baby and Regina got him when he was a week old. Babies changed a lot in a week. *What the hell will Nathan look like in a week? A month? A year? A decade?* She still held out hope for a mini-Regina.

“Oh, look at his little bird hair.” Snow flicked the tufts of yellow hair atop Nathan’s head as his little hospital hat slid off of his head. “He is a little duckling.” She fixed his cap for him.

“You want to hold him?” Emma asked.

Snow nodded eagerly and Emma eased the baby into her waiting arms. Henry snapped a picture of Snow with Nathan. Nathan was passed around to David and Henry next. Kathryn had gone and returned, bringing with her Tinker Bell and Maleficent. They marveled over Nathan for a couple of hours, especially Tinker Bell. For a while, Emma thought Tink might not know what a baby was, but then she considered Tinker Bell was probably just amazed Regina made it through all of this.

“Maybe this is why the pixie dust pointed to Robin,” Tinker Bell mused, sitting in a chair. She held Nathan close to her chest, like she was scared she might drop him.

“So, the baby is her soul mate?” Emma asked. The way Tink looked at her, she was certain it was a stupid question, but she did not get it. She looked to Regina for an explanation, but Regina had drifted to sleep.

“Why not just assume the pixie dust failed because Regina’s soul mate hadn’t been born? Or that maybe Regina and Robin were compatible when Regina was a doe-eyed lark locked in a cage and he had yet to start robbing from the rich to give to the poor?” Maleficent offered.

Tinker Bell frowned. “You make it sound so simple?”

“Because there are many explanations and we’ll probably never actually know why. Accept it,” Maleficent replied. “None of us here know how or why Fate works.”

Tinker Bell shrugged, as that was true. She turned back to Nathan and cooed at him. Snow and David hovered over her, waiting their turn for the baby again. Maleficent stood close as well. Henry ended up with Nathan, though.

“He’s so cute. I guess he gets that from his father,” Maleficent commented and then she shot Emma a grin and a wink.

Emma smiled. “Why not? I’m told I get it from my father.”

Regina groaned, her eyes half closed. “Please, no. I refuse to put up with another noble idiot.” Emma moved over to her and took her hand. She squeezed and held onto Emma.

“Aw, come on, Regina. You know you think we’re cute,” David teased her.

“I could destroy them both if you like,” Maleficent offered.

“No, I need one to help raise Nathan and I’m sure I’ll need the other to babysit eventually,” Regina replied. She shifted in bed a bit.

There was a little laughter, but it halted when Lily walked in. Emma was not sure what she expected, but all Lily did was put down a teddy bear and smile at Regina. Regina smiled back. Since talking to Lily about revenge, they had built some kind of relationship, but Emma was not entirely sure what it was. Regina never called it a friendship like she did with Maleficent, but Lily called Regina more than Maleficent did. Maybe it was sort of like a mentorship.
“You know, I’d thought he’d be a lot uglier with you for his father,” Lily said to Emma.

“Hey, your mom just totally called me cute,” Emma pointed out.

“My mother has no taste. She dated your partner, after all,” Lily remarked.

“Rude,” Maleficent chided her daughter, wrinkling her nose at Lily. “Make yourself useful and hold the baby.”

Emma was glad to see their mother/daughter relationship seemed to be good. Lily did not put up an argument and took Nathan from Snow, who got him back from Henry. Lily did not say anything snippy to Snow, did not glare at her, and held Nathan like he was precious.

“He’s way cuter than you,” Lily said to Emma. “But, I guess he gets that from his mother.”

Regina would have probably said something if she was awake. She had drifted off in the middle of a conversation with Kathryn. She had definitely earned the exhaustion, but Emma had a feeling it was more emotional than physical. After all, Regina went into labor expecting the worst and things went as well as a labor could go.

Emma smiled at the sight and eventually everyone left, without incident. Nathan was put down in the hospital bassinet. Emma made herself comfortable in a chair by Regina’s bed. Henry parked himself on the couch and wrote in one of his many journals to keep himself occupied. Regina was awake by then, looking for something to eat. The hospital staff moved quick to make it happen.

“You did good,” Emma whispered to Regina, holding her hand tightly. She kissed Regina’s knuckles.

Regina gave her a tired smile. “We made it.”

“Yeah, we made it.”

“I honestly thought Fate would take him from us or take me from all of you. This, while exhausting to be sure, wasn’t as difficult as I thought it would be,” Regina said. Emma hated to think of what Regina’s other deliveries were like when she had her stillborns. Just the amount of blood Regina talked about made Emma’s stomach turn.

“You’re strong and he’s strong. We’re all right.” Emma was not sure what else to say. She was overjoyed everything was fine. Fate had not even tried to worry them with something crazy like Nathan being turned the wrong way or him being in distress or even tearing for Regina. Yes, she had a few stitches, but that was expected.

Regina glanced over at the baby. “He is beautiful and we didn’t die. Do you think… do you think some sort of magic created him and protected us?”

“I’m not sure. I think it’s just you had the support, good meds, the best care, and less stress.” Emma was not ready to give into the magical excuse just yet, but Nathan existed and that was probably some sort of magic. He was also Regina’s easiest pregnancy to hear her tell it, but there were so many other factors involved that maybe it was magic, but maybe it was just life was so different now.

Regina nodded. “Yes, but I still wonder about the potion.”

Henry popped up with a wrinkle in his forehead. “What potion?”

“It’s nothing,” Regina said.
“No, tell me. What potion?” Henry inquired.

“Back in the Enchanted Forest, I took a potion to prevent me from having children. I didn’t want to my mother getting her hands on her grandchild. She had ruined enough lives for a lifetime,” Regina replied.

Henry grimaced. “So… you used magic to stop your body from doing something?”

“My body wasn’t enjoying the attempts anyway,” Regina commented.

“No, I mean, like, you shouldn’t have been able to have Nathan is what you’re saying,” Henry replied.

“By all accounts, no, I shouldn’t have had Nathan. I’m not sure what went wrong, not that I think Nathan is wrong. It’s just he should not exist,” Regina answered.

Henry scratched his chin. “Is it because Robin was your soul mate, maybe?”

Regina shrugged. “I’m not sure. I don’t believe that. I mean, if it was soul mate magic, somehow Nathan would have brought me and Robin together. If anything, Nathan gave me the strength to wash my hands of Robin and brought me and your mother to the place we needed to be.”

Henry nodded and rubbed the back of his neck. Emma narrowed her gaze on Henry. Something was going on here.

“What’s on your mind, kid?” Emma asked.

“Uh… I think I might’ve done something,” Henry replied with a wince.

“What do you think you did?” Regina inquired.

Henry drummed his fingers together. “I might’ve made a wish after I got my memories back.”

“What kind of wish?” Emma was scared to find out, but needed to know. What fresh Hell is waiting around the corner now?

“I wished my family was whole.”

“You wished your family was whole?” Regina echoed.

“Ma was talking about leaving and you were locked in the house and Grams was so focused on Neal that she didn’t realize Ma was hurting. And then Hook kept trying to push himself in, making it so Ma wasn’t focused on her problems, too busy trying to get rid of him. There was just so much going on and I just wanted us to be together and be happy, so I made a wish on a shooting star. I wasn’t thinking at the time,” Henry explained. His eyes fell to the floor and he frowned.

“Henry, it’s all right,” Regina assured him.

“Yeah, kid, you didn’t do anything wrong. It’s all right,” Emma said.

“But, what if you guys are only together because I made that wish? What if Nathan only exists because I made that wish?” Henry inquired.

“We’re together because we want to be. Me and your mom have been through a lot and we’ve had a connection for a long time. Maybe Nathan was the thing that pushed us over the edge, but we’re together because we love each other,” Emma assured him.
“Yes, we love each other,” Regina stated. “And if Nathan exists because of your wish, then so be it. He’s here and he’s family and we’re all a family, right?”

Henry smiled. “Yes.”

“All right. You have to be careful with wishing, though, Henry. More often than not, wishing is more about corrupting and punishing the wisher than anything else. You did the safest thing by wishing on a star, but you need to be careful,” Regina cautioned him.

His shoulders dropped. “I know.”

“Now, I don’t know about you all, but I just pushed a tiny human from my loins and I need sleep,” Regina stated.

“Gross!” Henry winced.

Emma chuckled and she walked Henry out. He would stay with her parents until Regina and Nathan were released from the hospital in a couple of days. David grinned at her and pulled her into a hug as soon as she was close enough.

“Dad, not that I don’t appreciate the hug, but it’s a little long and tight,” Emma groaned.

“You named him after me,” David said.

“Yeah, well, Henry’s name was taken,” Emma remarked.

Henry laughed along with his grandfather. Emma was happy her father was proud to have Nathan carry his name. It was not about blood relation with them, even though it seemed that way often. She felt confident her parents would love Nathan just as much as they loved Henry.

With Henry safe with her parents, Emma returned to Regina. Regina was sound asleep once again. Emma curled up in the chair by the bed and took Regina’s hand. Regina groaned and her eyes opened. She smiled at Emma.

“Hi,” Regina said.

Emma laughed. “Hi.” She squeezed Regina’s hand and kissed her knuckles. “I’m so proud of you.”

“Why?”

“I just am. You safely delivered us a baby boy.”

“Wished into existence by our now bigger boy.”

“Well, at least we know how your magic got beat. Crazy the universe would do this.”

Regina shook her head a little. “Maybe we needed something over the top. Saving each other’s lives didn’t seem to be doing anything, after all.”

Emma grinned. “Right and even this, it took you being exhausted to admit you love me.”

Regina yawned a little. “I never said such a thing.”

“Oh, no, you totally did. You told Henry we love each other, meaning you love me.” Emma grinned even more and sat up a little taller.
Regina laughed a little and offered her a smile. “I do, you know.”

Emma blinked and scrunched up her face. “You do what?”

“Love you. I love you so much. It’s been building for so long. I’m not even sure when it started. I can’t even describe it. It’s vast and deep and comforting and terrifying all at the same time. It’s like being cradled and drowned at the same time.”

Emma felt the same way. “Are you all right with it?”

Regina smiled and squeezed her hand. “I’m more than all right with it. You may wonder why it took me so long to say so, but I didn’t want you to think I was saying these things because of the baby. My emotions have been here long before the baby.”

“I know. Well, I know now.”

“I’m sorry if you ever doubted.”

Emma shook her head. “You know, I don’t think I’ve ever doubted you. I might have wondered, but never doubted. If doubt did sneak in, it’s because of my own insecurities, but you keep those at bay much of the time. Besides, actions speak louder than words. So, I might wonder, but then you cook and I know. Or I might wonder and then you hug me and I know. I might be like that for a while, but as long as you keep on acting, I’ll be fine.”

Regina nodded. “I’d like to add words, though. I love you, Emma Swan.”

Emma grinned stupidly and she did not care. In fact, it earned her a kiss and then Regina fell asleep once again. Emma just stared at her and Nathan. No magic in the world could make me feel this way, love them this much. But, if a wish opened our eyes, it’s good enough.

-8-8-8-

Next time: the end.
After Birth

Chapter Notes

I don’t own these characters; Disney/ABC does.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

20: After Birth

Emma expected life to calm down after the birth of Nathan, but it would seem their adventure with the baby just started. Regina wanted to have a presentation ceremony for him, which was something expected in the Enchanted Forest. Technically, Nathan was a prince and Regina felt it necessary to present him to the world. Emma did not mind. It was nice to see Regina beaming over their baby boy.

For a short while, Emma worried Regina would be upset that wish magic undid her magic, but Regina hit the ground running as a mom. She was all about breastfeeding Nathan, reading to him every chance she got, and she fell asleep in her rocking chair more often than not, even though he slept in the bassinet in their room. Seeing Regina with Nathan never failed to fill Emma’s heart with emotions.

Henry was attentive, though skittish with Nathan. The baby was small and loud when needy, which intimidated Henry. He had no problem holding Nathan in short bursts and he read to the baby whenever Nathan was lying down or in someone else’s arms. At the moment, he read Dr. Seuss stories to Nathan, who was in his crib while their mothers prepared for the gathering.

“You sure you want to do this in the house? You want people over?” Emma asked. Regina had already cleared space and was now cooking for the party.

“I’m not having his presentation ceremony at Granny’s. She’s helping with the catering, though,” Regina replied, moving around the kitchen. Every now and then, she glanced at the baby monitor, which had video and audio, in case Henry decided to go do something else. It tickled Emma how paranoid Regina was about Nathan.

“You agreed to that?” Emma was incredulous and the way Regina glared at her, it made her put her hands up. Fix it! Move on! “Okay. Well, what do you want me to do?”

“You already did what you could.”

Emma had set up the chairs and tables with Henry. Everything was in the backyard. It was quite nice weather, perfect for a party. Emma and Henry hung decorations and Emma picked out music, but Regina had to approve it.

“You could go get Nathan ready,” Regina said.

Emma nodded. “Can I put Ruby’s tuxedo onesie on him? You know she’s going to want to see it.”

“I set it out.”

Emma nodded again and then trotted up to the nursery. Henry left the room just as she went in and
she found out why. Nathan was asleep, as he often was during the day. He was a night baby and she
and Regina took turns being up with him. He was a month old to the day. A full head of golden hair.
Her mother still called it “bird hair” and Emma was inclined to agree. His “tuxedo” waited and she
carefully put his clothes on. He yawned and wiggled before looking at her with the deepest brown
eyes.

“You know, Ducky, you’re going to be a heartbreaker, just like your big brother,” Emma said.

“Hey, I am not a heartbreaker,” Henry objected from the doorway.

“Oh, really? I’ve seen you getting texts from a bunch of different girls. I’d pat you on the back, but I
know your mother wouldn’t want me to encourage you,” Emma replied. She then turned to look at
him and blinked. “Wow, you’re looking… Wow.”

Henry shrugged and brushed off his lapel for no reason. He was in a tailored dark blue suit with a
rainbow tie. He had the nerve to have on a pink shirt with matching socks, but somehow he pulled it
off. His hair was cut and styled and he looked down right handsome. Emma was not sure Regina
would let him leave his room like that.

“Your mom knows you’re dressed like that?” Emma asked.

“She told me to dress my best. She said she was upset she never got a chance to do this for me, so
she wanted it to be like you guys were presenting both of us to her court, even though we all know
her court isn’t invited. It’s family and friends,” he replied and fiddled with his cuff.

She nodded. “I wonder if she put out something for me.”

“I looked. It’s on the bed. She left you a dress and a suit. I guess it’s up to you. The suit looks nice,
though.”

“Your suit looks nice. I don’t think I want to compete with you.” Emma would put on the dress
because it would shock the hell out of Regina and her parents. And she was right.

When Emma descended the stairs, holding Nathan and with Henry at her side, Regina looked like
she swallowed her tongue as she caught sigh of Emma in her little black dress. Emma smirked, but
then remembered Regina had not put on her party clothes yet. Oh, no. She’s going to dress to kill
and I’m going to die with a dopey smile on my face. It was an accurate guess as she felt like her heart
stopped when it was Regina’s turn to make an entrance.

People had already arrived at the party when Regina disappeared upstairs to change into her gown.
There were witnesses for the moment Emma laid eyes on Regina and felt like everything paused.
Regina smirked at Emma. Emma was not sure if she knew how to breathe now. Regina sauntered to
her side while Emma gawked at the most amazing sight ever. The white dress fit Regina like a glove
and, though it was cut tastefully, it left just the right things to the imagination, but still looked like
temptation and sin.

“You might want to pick you tongue up off the floor, darling,” Regina whispered to Emma.

“Yeah, I’ll need it when your dress ends up on the floor,” Emma replied. It took all of her willpower
not to grab Regina, press her against the nearest flat surface, and do unspeakable things that did not
require an audience. She could not control her hands, though, and one ended up resting on Regina’s
ass.

Regina cleared her throat, but left Emma’s hand where it was. “Where are our boys? We should
present them as soon as possible and then just let everyone enjoy the party.”
Emma smirked. “And you can put Nathan back to bed?” She could practically hear Regina internally fretting over the party being too much stimulus for Nathan.

“Oh, please. Everyone here would raise up in revolt if he weren’t here for at least an hour. So, who has him?”

“Last I saw Kathryn was about to fight my mother to death over him.”

Kathryn had Nathan in her arms and a crowd around her. Regina took charge of Nathan and then they went to get Henry. He had his own circle, women of all ages around him to tell him how dapper he looked. Regina rolled her eyes to all of the attention.

“You’re not going to survive when he starts dating in a couple of years,” Emma said.

“No one is good enough for him,” Regina replied.

“You can’t think like that. I mean, come on.” Emma motioned between the two of them.

Regina sighed. “I make no promises to like anyone he brings home.”

“As long as you don’t set them on fire, I’ll consider it a win.”

Regina smiled and Emma was not sure if she could trust there would not be fire involved when Henry eventually brought someone home. For the moment, though, they just needed to do this presenting thing, whatever it was. Regina led their family to the stairs, giving everyone a good view of them. The room seemed to know to quiet down without Regina having to say anything. Regina eased Nathan into Emma’s arms.

“Welcome, ladies and gentlemen. I would like to thank you for showing up for the presentation of both of our sons. You’re all familiar with this amazing young man, Henry Daniel Mills.” Regina put an arm around Henry, who waved. “I hope you will all become just as familiar with Nathan David Swan-Mills.”

Emma held up the baby. Everyone held up their glasses and cheered. It was a little amazing. Emma grinned. Regina smiled and winked at her. The party continued. A good time was had by all, until the clean up anyway. Emma complained the whole time, picking up all kinds of sexual promises from Regina to get her to stop.

-8-8-8-8-

Emma was served barely a week after she went back to work from her eight weeks of maternity leave and vacation time. Her father wanted to know what was going, as did Mulan. Emma was not sure why she was being served and she did not want to open the subpoena to find out. Then, Regina called her less than a minute later.

“Robin’s trying to take us to court,” Regina said.

Emma frowned and paced in front of her desk. “Can he do that?” He signed away his parental rights and he also violated the confidentiality contract he signed. How was he taking them to court? If anything, they should be taking him to court.

“I don’t know why he would want to waste his time considering the fact that he is still fighting with Marian over custody of Roland. I’m sure his lawyer has advised him against it. Of course, if the man knew when to quit things probably wouldn’t be so bad.”
Emma ran her hand through her hair. “He signed away his parental rights.”

“Indeed he did. I’m sure he’ll try to argue he didn’t understand what he was signing, which could be true. He’s from the Enchanted Forest where men had all the rights and children belonged to their fathers. Mostly because wives belonged to their husbands.”

Emma grunted. *Fuck that place.* “So, we’re going to have to go to court?”

“Yes, but I’m certain this will go in our favor. Don’t worry. I’d never let him take Nathan from us. But, this does bring up a new point.”

Emma sighed and fell back into her chair. “Why is this kid’s life so exciting already? He’s barely two months old.”

“Yes, but this isn’t too terrible. Marian contacted me through Kathryn. She was curious if we’d allow Roland to know Nathan.”

Emma rubbed her chin. “I never thought about it.”

“Honestly, I haven’t either. I don’t think of Nathan being connected to Roland, as I don’t think of Robin being his father. As far as I’m concerned, Nathan is as much yours and mine as Henry is.”

“Yeah.” Emma never thought about Robin when she looked at Nathan. Making it better, Nathan looked like a blond Regina. He had Regina’s nose and her mouth. And since most of Storybrooke acted like Emma had impregnated Regina, Emma just acted like she had and allowed the idea to play in her mind. *Am I brainwashing myself?* She did not care. Nathan was her son. “What do you want to do?”

“Well, we need to discuss how and when we’re going to break the news to Nathan that you’re not his father.”

Emma snickered. “That’s bullshit. I’m going to do the whole Darth Vader thing with him.” She planned to buy the mask and everything. She would take the moment, make it light, and hopefully save them both some heartache.

“In all seriousness, if this case makes it to court, Roland will be very aware that Nathan is his biological brother. Is it fair of us to let that relationship fall to the wayside when they will both eventually know they’re blood brothers?”

Emma sighed and ran her hand through her hair. “Sounds like you want them to have something.”

“I’m not sure. I think we need to talk this over in depth tonight and I suppose talk about Robin’s last ditch attempt to get me to kill him.”

Emma laughed. “You’re too tired to kill anyone right now.”

“As soon as Nathan’s eating solid foods and sleeping through the night, Robin might not have much time left.”

Emma laughed more. “Okay. Let me finish up here and then we can talk when I get home.”

“All right. I love you.”

“Love you, too.” That was always their farewell and then the call was disconnected. Emma glanced up to see her father and Mulan staring at her. She looked right back. “What?”
“Don’t ‘what’ us. What was that all about?” David demanded, pointing to the phone.


Mulan grunted and folded her arms across her chest. “He is quite the annoyance, is he not? Do you know he had the nerve to tell the judge it was immoral for Marian to have Roland around me? He wanted to know how he was supposed to explain my relationship to Marian to his son. He doesn’t even know what my relationship with Marian is.”

Emma shook her head. She just wanted to punch Robin in the chest and watch all the air escape his body. “He’s just an all around asshole. What, he thinks it’s okay for Roland to be around him while he chases after anyone with nice legs?”

Mulan scowled. “I’m not sure what he thinks, but he is certain it’s wrong for Roland to be around me. What is he trying to do with you?”

Emma growled. “He’s taking me and Regina to court over Nathan.”

“I had heard he shouted about Nathan being his in the diner. It is true?” Mulan asked.

Emma suspected Mulan was just trying to be polite, knowing full well Robin was Nathan’s biological parent. But, she appreciated the effort. “Nathan is mine and I don’t care what he says. I can’t believe he wants to go to court over this. What a douche.”

“Why is he doing this crap? He can’t get custody of one kid, so he’ll go after the other?” David asked, rubbing his chin in thought.

“Maybe he thinks it’s honorable or whatever the hell he always says,” Emma replied with a shrug. She was sick of Robin Hood already.

“A man of honor wouldn’t have slept with the woman responsible for him being a widower in the first place, no offense,” David commented.

Emma waved it off. “None taken. That shit disgusts Regina, too.”

“I wonder what made him fall so far from this man of great honor we have all heard so much about,” Mulan said. “Marian speaks highly of him when they were together, but doesn’t understand this new man. What changed him? For the worse.”

“I dunno. Because honestly, everybody here has sort of lived up to their Disney expectations in some way, not counting Disney missing Mom’s lesson in badass with the archery or your sexual exploration with bisexuality and all, but he’s, like, far from that awesome fox.” Emma fought off a frown. She did not want this to affect her much. She did not want to give Robin that sort of power over her.

“I very much enjoy the children’s movie mimicking my life,” Mulan said. She had watched several Disney movies with Roland on recommendation from Emma.

“Me, too, you know. I’ve always been a Disney fan. It was a great escape, so Robin’s really wrecking one of my movies.”

“Is there any chance of him winning in court?” David’s face tensed and his brow wrinkled. It looked like the thought left a bad taste in his mouth.

“I’m gonna go with no and not even because of the fact that he signed a contract. What judge wants
to be on Regina’s bad side right now? Did she or did she not stop that hydra by herself last month while grocery shopping and her stitches hadn’t even healed yet? Everyone knows one wrong move and Regina might just retire and leave us all to die,” Emma said. It was a bit of a joke. She knew Regina would never just give up on the town, but most people did not know that.

“Well, I wish you both luck. Robin sounds like he has his hands full and I’d never advice someone to take on a flock of strong, determined women like he has,” David remarked.

Emma was happy with the vote of confidence from her father. The conversation shifted to deputy candidates. Dorothy had replaced Emma for her two months off and she seemed interested in a full time job. They would give her a call and also post openings for two more deputies. David would train those two. It was exciting to see them grow into a real sheriff’s department.

At the end of her shift, Emma went home. Regina was there and she would be there for at least another month. Emma suspected Regina would take two more months, though. Kathryn was doing a good job and did not have a problem calling Regina if she needed advice while Regina certainly seemed to be enjoying her time with Nathan, as well as Henry since he was off from school.

“Ma! Come arrest, Mom. She cheats!” Henry complained.

“Oh, believe me, if that was an arrest-able offense, I’d have put your mother under the jail by now,” Emma commented as she stepped into the living room. Regina and Henry were on the sofa, playing video games. Regina had gotten quite good thanks to playing with Henry at least once a day. But, also, Regina cheated, at damn near everything and she was shameless about it.

“You wouldn’t be able to catch me because I cheat,” Regina pointed out with a smile.

Emma snickered and leaned down to kiss Regina. She lingered for a long moment, cheating for Henry. Regina grunted when she realized Emma was not going to move and she tried to shove Emma out of the way, but she was not physically stronger than the sheriff. Emma laughed and then turned her attention to Nathan. He was bundled up in his bouncer and sound asleep. She leaned down and kissed his forehead.

“He’s living my dream,” Emma remarked as she moved Regina over. Regina cuddled into her as soon as she was down.

“I’m sure he gets it from you,” Regina replied.

Emma just smiled. They hung out for a while with Emma watching them play and fed Nathan when he woke up in a fit. Eventually, Emma went to take a shower and then took over for Regina on the game. Regina made dinner and then fed Nathan again, because he was a hungry little guy Emma noted about a day after he was born. Regina and Emma did not get a chance to seriously talk until they down for the night, lying in bed.

“So, what do you want to do with Roland? I mean, I think it would be okay for him and Nathan to know each other,” Emma said, settling an arm around Regina. They had gotten used to her playing the big spoon, so they kept it up even without Regina’s pregnant belly there. Emma sort of missed being able to stroke Regina’s swollen stomach, but even as Regina lost the weight, she allowed Emma to caress her pretty much wherever her heart desired. Emma was quite fond of Regina’s stretch marks and could spend hours running her fingers up and down them. To be fair, Regina did the same to Emma whenever she got the chance.

“I suppose since Nathan will eventually know they are related,” Regina sighed, tucking her head underneath Emma’s chin.
“You don’t like this idea?”

“How can I trust Roland to not say awful things to Nathan? Both of Roland’s parents hate me.”

Emma scoffed. “Marian doesn’t hate you anymore. She came to the baby shower and the presentation and was civil. You guys talked both times. I saw you. You’re just used to expecting the worse of people. I’ve been around her and Mulan enough to know they’re good people and even if Marian wasn’t good, Mulan would never let that happen. Mulan’s honorable.”

Regina nodded. “This is true. She’s almost as insufferable as you.”

Emma grinned. “As long as you don’t go after her for a date. I think that’d be the thing to make Marian hate you again.”

“I’m quite happy with my own insufferable, noble idiot, thank you very much. If you trust them, then I have no problem with Nathan getting to know Roland.”

“Besides, we’ll probably be there with them. I mean, what would they be able to do with Roland and Nathan at the same time? Roland is six years older than Nathan. Once Nathan gets to the age to do stuff, Roland will want to do other stuff.”

Regina’s brow wrinkled a bit. “Henry doesn’t mind being around Nathan.”

“No, but Henry’s older. He’s more mature and he realizes Nathan is kinda limited because he’s a baby. Roland won’t get that for a while. Nathan’s just going to be a little shrimp to him more than likely who can’t do anything fun,” Emma stated.

Regina frowned. “That doesn’t sound like it would be productive for Nathan.”

“It’ll be okay. Roland might end up thinking it’s cool to have a little brother, like Henry, and want to include him in tons of stuff. We’ll just have to wait to see what their personalities are like. So, what’re we going to do about Robin?” It took all of Emma’s willpower to not spit the name out.

“We’ll see him in court.” The way Regina’s voice went low and quite devilish sent shivers down Emma’s spine.

Emma tried to stay on task, but Regina could be so distracting, even when she did not mean to be. “And when do we tell Nathan about Robin?”

Regina grunted. “I think we should do it as soon as he can grasp the concept of a father. You should be ready for some sting, just in case. If he does reject you at first, I’m sure he’ll bounce out of it soon enough. We both know Nathan will adore you. He might not even care that you’re not biologically related to him.”

Emma nodded, but her stomach bubbled a little at the thought. “Do you think so?” She hoped it went that way. She loved Nathan with all of her heart and he was her son, no matter what. Hell, as far as the town was concerned he was hers. She did not need to give birth to him or anything. I think I understand Regina a little better now.

“We’ll have to wait and see what his personality is like, but it is very much possible that he’ll shrug it off,” Regina said.

“I guess we do have to wait and see what he’s like.” Emma could not wait to see what sort of personality Nathan had. Who was their son? What was his voice like? What were his interests? She could not wait to share all of that and more with him.
Seeing Robin in court went just how Regina assumed it would go and that did not surprise Emma. Even though Regina had been mayor of Storybrooke since the town had been created, the Curse gave her a background in law, so she knew how the law worked beyond her office. Robin did not seem to understand.

“How can you just take a son from his father? What sort of madness is this?” Robin demanded, having the nerve to pound the table in front of him. His lawyer, a guy Emma never met before or even seen around town, put his hand on Robin’s arm, but Robin yanked away. The lawyer put his head down. “This makes no sense! That is my boy and he should be with me!”

“I haven’t taken a father from his son. You signed a contract and the contract is rather explicit. Your ignorance of the law doesn’t excuse the fact that you signed it. It also lays things out rather clearly, so I don’t see how you claim you didn’t understand. You should consider yourself lucky you weren’t sued for breaking the confidentiality agreement you signed. Breach of contract is quite serious and you’ve done that in a rather public way on more than one occasion,” the judge said.

Robin glared at the judge. “You cannot possibly think it’s wise to let these two women raise my son.”

The judge, a young man named Cody Marahuté, scowled at Robin. “I think they’ve done a fine job with one young man and I see no reason to stand in their way. You signed a contract and based on your behavior in my court, I think you did the right thing.”

“What type of man are you?” Robin roared.

“The type who upholds the law.” Judge Marahuté banged his gavel and it was all over.

Robin, who had apparently been in court enough to know that once the hammer was down, the judge was done with him, turned to glare at Regina and Emma. “This isn’t over.”

Regina smirked. “No, I’m fairly certain it is. Any further contact between you and my child will be just like a stranger approaching him. Once that happens, you’re opening yourself up to be dealt with by the law.” Of course Regina had to take Emma’s hand, reminding Robin just who was the law in these parts.

“Stay away from our son,” Emma said. She would love the excuse to throw him in jail, but she did not want Robin anywhere near their kids. Who knew what sort of damage he might cause. She did not want to find out.

Robin’s face was red and he looked like he was about to pop a blood vessel in his face. Emma found she did not care. She was sick of the man and sick of him bothering family. She would definitely arrest him should he try anything with their son or with Regina.

With Robin out of the way for the moment, things were calm with the Swan-Mills family. Henry was a great help to his parents, volunteering to watch Nathan for an hour or two just to give his mothers time alone. It upset Emma a little that they could not have a proper date just yet, but she and Regina liked to cuddle in a lawn chair in the backyard when they got the chance. They watched the sky and enjoyed being close.

“This has been a wild year,” Emma commented. Regina was on top of her. There was nothing sexual going on… well, much. They were both fully clothed. Hell, Regina even had shoes on,
because heaven forbid dirt touch the Queen’s toes, Emma once joked. Emma’s hands were glued to Regina’s ass, though.

“Many unexpected things, but several of them have been quite good,” Regina said, a hand playing with the hem of Emma’s shirt. Every now and then, her fingertips brushed against Emma’s bare skin and sent delightful jolts through her.

Emma smiled and moved her hand to Regina’s stomach. Regina was odd, in the fact that she was not very ticklish, but if Emma touched her lightly enough, she squirmed. Emma smiled as Regina wiggled against her. “Does that mean you’re willing to have another?” The question was mostly teasing.

“If I could, I would have another with you.” Regina was once again unable to have children, though. It would seem Henry’s wish was good for one child, but it was good enough.

Emma sighed, feeling high and sober at the same time. “I know you would.”

“And maybe some day, we will.”

Emma blinked. “Yeah?” Regina would be willing to adopt a child with her? Wow.

“But, for the moment, I’d rather we raise the two we have and get a chance to be alone every now and then. The more children we have around here, the more we’d have to divide our attention. I’m not sure if I want that just yet,” Regina said.

Emma threaded her hand through Regina’s hair. “I don’t think I want that either. I want a chance to spoil you a little bit.”

Regina chuckled. “Spoil me? My dear, I was once queen and before that I was a princess, I think I am spoiled.”

“No, you’re the one who needs spoiling.” Regina kissed her chin.

Emma smiled. “Well, I won’t stop you if you try.”

Regina’s eyes danced with mischief. “Oh, I will try and succeed. I’ve already done it with meals.”

Emma could not call Regina a liar on that. She had also done it with clothes. Whenever Emma tore something—and it happened often because she was clumsy as hell—Regina replaced Emma’s gear with something similar, but more top of the line. Emma did not complain as her new stuff was a little more durable than her old stuff.

“I’ve also done it with other things.” Regina leaned up and nipped Emma’s earlobe.

Emma grunted as she felt a pulse ripple through her and she squeezed Regina’s butt. “That you have.”

“I know.” Regina kissed Emma softly.

Emma’s eyes fluttered shut and she kissed Regina back. Her hands wandered from over Regina’s pants to inside of her pants. She pulled Regina closer to her and earned a moan from Regina as she
ground against Emma. The noise hit Emma right in her stomach and she was tempted to take things further, but their sons were a couple of rooms away. Regina seemed to think the same as she pulled away and glared at Emma.

“That was not my fault,” Emma said. She would have held her hands up in surrender, but her hands were very happy where they were.

Regina scoffed. “Everything is always your fault, my love. But, if our sons weren’t a stone’s throw away, I might be willing to indulge your darkest fantasies.”

Emma gulped. That sounded amazing and like something she wanted very much. “So, you still owe me a baby-moon.” Now, her mind played with all of the things they could do during a baby-moon.

Regina chuckled. “And I will give you that as soon as Nathan is a little older and we find a sitter I can trust.” The promise had been when Nathan was six-months old, but Emma was not sure that would hold and she could understand that.

“My mom.”

“I said I can trust.”

Emma scoffed. “Oh, please. You know you trust my mom.” She was not sure if Regina would let Snow watch Nathan for several days, though.

“I trust her to be herself.”

Emma laughed and pulled Regina even closer. “Leave my mother alone.” It was probably a good idea to not have her mother watch Nathan, though. For all of her good intentions, Snow would be the one to accidentally start the issue of who Nathan’s biological father was.

Regina shook her head. “It’s just not in my nature. We have time to discuss who will watch Nathan. Maybe we can see if Henry is able to be trusted on his own for a couple of days.”

“He’ll get a kick out of that.” Emma thought Henry might have it in him to be home by himself for a weekend or so and if not, her parents were close, as were other friends they could trust him with. He handled himself well whenever they left him alone for a few hours.

“Yes, he’s been so mature. I think we owe it to him to show that we recognize his growth.”

“Right, so how about a short baby-moon when Nathan is six months? We can just go for a weekend.”

“It’s a date.” Regina moved to give Emma a sweet kiss.

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The end.

Thanks for reading my story. I hope you enjoyed it and I hope to you check out some of my other work. For now, I’m returning to my padded cell. Come say hi to me on Facebook.

Chapter End Notes
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